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HARD CASH.

A Matter-of-Fact Romance.

BY CHARLES READE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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HARD CASH.

CHAPTER I.

CHRONOLOGY.

The Hard Cash sailed from Canton months before the boat race at Henley recorded in Chapter I.; but it landed in Barkington a fortnight after the last home event I recorded in its true series.

Now this fortnight, as it happens, was fruitful of incidents; and must be dealt with at once. After that, "Love" and "Cash," the converging branches of this story, will flow together in one stream.

Alfred Hardie kept faith with Mrs. Dodd, and, by an effort she appreciated, forbore to express his love for Julia except by the pen. He took in Lloyd's shipping news, and got it down by rail in hopes there would be something about the Agra; then he could call at Albion Villa; Mrs. Dodd had given him that loophole: meantime he kept hoping for an invitation: which never came.

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Julia was now comparatively happy: and so indeed was Alfred: but then the male of our species likes to be superlatively happy, not comparatively: and that Mrs. Dodd forgot, or perhaps had not observed.

One day Sampson was at Albion Villa, and Alfred knew it. Now, though it was a point of honour with poor Alfred not to hang about after Julia until her father's return, he had a perfect right to lay in wait for Sampson, and hear something about her; and he was so deep in love that even a word at second hand from her lips was a drop of dew to his heart.

So he strolled up towards the Villa. He had nearly reached it, when a woman ran past him making the most extraordinary sounds; I can only describe it as screaming under her breath. Though he only saw her back, he recognised Mrs. Maxley. One back differeth from another, whatever you may have been told to the contrary in novels and plays. He called to her: she took no notice, and darted wildly through the gate of Albion Villa. Alfred's curiosity was excited, and he ventured to put his head over the gate. But Mrs. Maxley had disappeared.

Alfred had half a mind to go in and inquire if anything was the matter: it would be a good excuse.

While he hesitated, the dining-room window was thrown violently up, and Sampson looked out: "Hy! Hardie! my good fellow! for Heaven's sake a fly! and a fast one!"

It was plain something very serious had occurred: so Alfred flew towards the nearest fly-stand. On

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the way, he fell in with a chance fly drawn up at a public-house; he jumped on the box and drove rapidly towards Albion Villa. Sampson was hobbling to meet him—he had sprained his ankle or would not have asked for a conveyance—to save time he got up beside Alfred, and told him to drive hard to Little Friar-street. On the way he explained hurriedly: Mrs. Maxley had burst in on him at Albion Villa to say her husband was dying in torment: and indeed the symptoms she gave were alarming, and, if correct, looked very like lock-jaw: but her description had been cut short by a severe attack, which choked her and turned her speechless and motionless, and white to the very lips:

"'Oho,' sis I, 'brist-pang!' And at such a time, ye know. But these women are as unseasonable as they are unreasonable. Now Angina pictoris, or brist-pang, is not curable through the lungs, nor the stomick, nor the liver, nor the stays, nor the saucepan, as the bunglintinkerindox of the schools pretind; but only through that mighty mainspring the Brain: and instid of going meandering to the Brain round by the stomick, and so giving the wumman lots o' time to die first, which is the scholastic practice, I wint at the Brain direct, took a puff o' chlorofm, put m' arm round her neck, laid her back in a chair—she didn't struggle, for, when this disorrder grips ye, ye can't move hand nor foot—and had my lady into the land of Nod in half a minute; thin off t' her husband; so here's th' Healer between two stools—

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spare the whipcord, spoil the knacker!—it would be a good joke if I was to lose both pashints for want of a little unbeequity, wouldn't it?—Lash the lazy vagabin!—Not that I care: what interest have I in their lives? they never pay: but ye see custom's second nature; an d'Ive formed a vile habit; I've got to be a Healer among the killers: an d'a Triton among—the millers: here we are at last, Hiven be praised." And he hopped into the house faster than most people can run on a good errand. Alfred flung the reins to a cad, and followed him.

The room was nearly full of terrified neighbours: Sampson shouldered them all roughly out of his way; and there, on a bed, lay Maxley's gaunt figure in agony.

His body was drawn up by the middle into an arch, and nothing touched the bed but the head and the heels; the toes were turned back in the most extraordinary contortion, and the teeth set by the rigour of the convulsion; and in the man's white face and fixed eyes were the horror and anxiety, that so often show themselves when the body feels itself in the gripe of Death.

Mr. Osmond the surgeon was there; he had applied a succession of hot cloths to the pit of the stomach, and was trying to get laudanum down the throat; but the clenched teeth were impassable.

He now looked up and said politely: "Ay! Dr. Sampson, I am glad to see you here. The seizure is

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of a cataleptic nature, I apprehend. The treatment hitherto has been hot epithems to the abdomen, and——"

Here Sampson, who had examined the patient keenly and paid no more attention to Osmond than to a fly buzzing, interrupted him as unceremoniously:

"Poisoned," said he, philosophically.

"Poisoned!!" screamed the people.

"Poisoned!" cried Mr. Osmond, in whose little list of stereotyped maladies poisoned had no place. "Is there any one you have reason to suspect?"

"I don't suspect, nor conject, sir: I know. The man is poisoned, the substance strychnine; now stand out of the way you gaping gabies, and let me work: hy, young Oxford! you are a man: get behind and hold both his arms, for your life! That's you."

He whipped off his coat: laid hold of Osmond's epithems, chucked them across the room, saying, "You may just as well squirt rose-water at a house on fire;" drenched his handkerchief with chloroform, sprang upon the patient like a mountain cat, and chloroformed him with all his might.

Attacked so skilfully and resolutely, Maxley resisted little for so strong a man; but the potent poison within fought virulently: as a proof, the chloroform had to be renewed three times before it could produce any effect. At last the patient yielded to the fumes, and became insensible.

Then the arched body subsided, and the rigid

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muscles relaxed and turned supple. Sampson kneaded the man like dough, by way of comment.

"It is really very extraordinary," said Osmond.

"Mai—dearr—sirr—nothing's extraornary; t' a man that knows the reason of iverything."

He then inquired if any one in the room had noticed at what intervals of time the pains came on.

"I am sorry to say it is continuous," said Osmond.

"Mai—dearr—sirr—nothing on airth is continuous: iverything has paroxysms and remissions—from a toothache t' a cancer."

He repeated his query in various forms, till at last a little girl squeaked out: "If—*you*—please, sir, the throes do come about every ten minutes, for I was a looking at the clock; I carries father his dinner at twelve."

"If you please, ma'am, there's half a guinea for you for not being such a n' ijjit as the rest of the world, especially the Dockers." And he jerked her half a sovereign.

A stupor fell on the assembly. They awoke from it to examine the coin, and see if it was real; or only yellow air.

Maxley came to, and gave a sigh of relief. When he had been sensible, yet out of pain, nearly eight minutes by the clock, Sampson chloroformed him again. "I'll puzzle ye, my friend strych," said he. "How will ye get your perriodical paroxysm when the man is insensible? The Dox say y' act direct on the spinal marrow. Well, there's the spinal

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marrow where you found it just now. Act on it again, my lad! I give ye leave—if ye can. Ye can't; bekase ye must pass through the Brain to get there: and I occupy the Brain with a swifter ajint than y' are, and mean to keep y' out of it till your power to kill evaporates, being a vigitable."

With this his spirits mounted, and he indulged in a harmless and favourite fiction: he feigned the company were all males and medical students, Osmond included, and he the lecturer: "Now, jintlemen," said he, "obsairve the great Therey of the Perriodeecity and Remittency of all disease; in conjunckshin with its practice. All diseases have paroxysms, and remissions, which occur at intervals; sometimes it's a year, sometimes a day, an hour, ten minutes; but whatever th' interval, they are true to it: they keep time. Only when the Disease is retirin, the remissions become longer, the paroxysms return at a greater interval: and just the revairse when the pashint is to die. This, jintlemen, is man's life from the womb to the grave: the throes that precede his birth are remittent like ivery thing else, but come at diminished intervals when he has really made up his mind to be born (his first mistake, sirs, but not his last); and the paroxysms of his mortal disease come at shorter intervals when he is really goon off the hooks: but still chronometrically; just as watches keep time whether they go fast or slow. Now, jintlemen, isn't this a beautiful Therey?"

"Oh mercy! Oh good people help me! Oh Jesus

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Christ have pity on me!" And the sufferer's body was bent like a bow, and his eyes filled with horror, and his toes pointed at his chin.

The Doctor hurled himself on the foe: "Come," said he, "smell to this, lad! That's right! He is better already, jintlemen, or he couldn't howl, ye know. Deevil a howl in um before I gave um puff chlorofm. Ah! would ye? would ye?"

"Oh! oh! oh! oh! ugh!——ah!"

The Doctor got off the insensible body, and resumed his lecture calmly, like one who has disposed of some childish interruption; "and now to th' application of the Therey: if the poison can reduce the tin minutes' interval to five minutes, this pashint will die: and if I can get the tin minutes up t' half hour, this pashint will live. Any way, jintlemen, we won't detain y' unreasonably: the case shall be at an end by one o'clock."

On hearing this considerate stipulation, up went three women's aprons to their eyes.

"Alack! poor James Maxley! he is at his last hour: it be just gone twelve, and a dies at one."

Sampson turned on the weepers: "Who says that, y' ijjits? I said the case would end at one: a case ends when the pashint gets well, or dies."

"Oh, that is good news for poor Susan Maxley; her man is to be well by one o'clock, Doctor says."

Sampson groaned, and gave in. He was strong, but not strong enough to make the populace suspend an opinion.

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Yet it might be done: by chloroforming them.

The spasms came at longer intervals and less violent: and Maxley got so fond of the essence of Insensibility, that he asked to have some in his own hand to apply at the first warning of the horrible pains.

Sampson said, "Any fool can complete the cure;" and, by way of practical comment, left him in Mr. Osmond's charge: but with an understanding that the treatment should not be varied: that no laudanum should be given: but, in due course, a stiff tumbler of brandy and water; or two. "If he gets drunk, all the better; a little intoxication weakens the body's memory of the pain it has endured, and so expedites the cure. Now off we go to th' other."

"The body's memory!" said Mr. Osmond to himself: "what on earth does the Quack mean?"

The driver, de jure, of the fly, was not quite drunk enough to lose his horse and vehicle without missing them. He was on the look out for the robber, and, as Alfred came round the corner full pelt, darted at the reins with a husky remonstrance, and Alfred cut into him with the whip: an angry explanation—a guinea—and behold the driver sitting behind complacent, and nodding.

Arrived at Albion Villa, Alfred asked Sampson submissively if he might come in and see the wife cured.

"Why of course," said Sampson, not knowing the delicate position.

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"Then ask me in before Mrs. Dodd," murmured Alfred, coaxingly.

"Oo, ay,' said the Doctor, knowingly. "I see."

Mrs. Maxley was in the dining-room: she had got well of herself: but was crying bitterly, and the ladies would not let her go home yet; they feared the worst, and that some one would blurt it out of her.

To this anxious trio entered Sampson, radiant "There, it's all right. Come, little Maxley, ye needn't cry, he has got lots more mischief to do in the world yet: but, oh, wumman, it is lucky you came to me and not to any of the tinkering dox. No more cat and dog for you and him, but for the Chronothairmal Therey: and you may bless my puppy's four bones too: he ran and stole a fly like a man, and drove hilter-skilter: now, if I had got to your house two minutes later, your Jamie would have larned the great secret ere this." He threw up the window. "Haw you! come away and receive the applause due from beauty t' ajeelity."

Alfred came in timidly, and was received with perfect benignity, and self-possession, by Mrs. Dodd; but Julia's face was dyed with blushes, and her eyes sparkled the eloquent praise she was ashamed to speak before them all. But such a face as hers scarce needed the help of a voice at such a time. And, indeed, both the lovers' faces were a pretty sight, and a study. How they stole loving glances! but tried to keep within bounds, and not steal more

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than three per minute! and how unconscious they endeavoured to look, the intervening seconds! and what windows were the demure complacent visages they thought they were making shutters of! Innocent love has at least this advantage over melodramatic, that it can extract exquisite sweetness out of so small a thing. These sweethearts were not alone, could not open their hearts, must not even gaze too long; yet to be in the same room even on such terms was a taste of Heaven.

"But, oh, Doctor," said Mrs. Maxley, "are you sure he is better?"

"He is out of danger, I tell ye."

"But, dear heart, ye don't tell me what he ailed. Ma'am, if you had seen him you would have said he was taken for death."

"Pray what *is* the complaint?" inquired Mrs. Dodd.

"Oh, didn't I tell ye? poisoned."

This intelligence was conveyed with true scientific calmness, and received with feminine ejaculations of horror. Mrs. Maxley was indignant into the bargain: "Don't ye go giving my house an ill-name! We keeps no poison."

Sampson fixed his eyes sternly on her: "Wumman, ye know better: ye keep strychnine: for th' use an delectation of your domistic animal."

"Strychnine! I never heard tell of it. Is that Latin for arsenic?"

"Now isn't this lamentable? Why arsenic is a

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mital: strychnine a vigitable. Nlist me! Your man was here seeking strychnine to poison his mouse; a harmless, domistic, necessary mouse: I told him mice were a part of Nature as much as Maxleys, and life as sweet tit as tim: but he was dif to sceintific and chrischin preceps; so I told him to go to the Deevil: 'I will,' sis he, and went t'a docker. The two assassins have poisoned the poor beastie between 'em: and thin, been the greatest miser in the world, except one, he will have roasted his victim, and ate her on the sly, impriguated with strychnine. 'I'll steal a march on t'other miser,' sis he; and that's you: t' his brain flew the strychnine: his brain sint it to his spinal marrow: and we found my lorrd bent like a bow, and his jaw locked, and nearer knowin the great secret than any man in England will be this year to live: and sairves the assassinating old vagibin right."

"Heaven forgive you, Doctor," said Mrs. Maxley, half mechanically.

"For curin a murrderer? Not likely."

Mrs. Maxley, who had shown signs of singular uneasiness during Sampson's explanation, now rose, and said in a very peculiar tone, she must go home directly.

Mrs. Dodd seemed to enter into her feelings, and made her go in the fly, taking care to pay the fare and the driver out of her own purse. As the woman got into the fly, Sampson gave her a piece of friendly and practical advice. "Nixt time he has a mind to

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breakfast on strychnine, you tell me; and I'll put a pinch of arsenic in the saltcellar, and cure him safe as the Bank. But this time he'd have been did, and stiff, long before such a slow ajint as arsenic could get a hold on um."

They sat down to luncheon: but neither Alfred nor Julia fed much, except upon sweet stolen looks; and soon the active Sampson jumped up, and invited Alfred to go round his patients. Alfred could not decline, but made his adieux with regret so tender, and undisguised, that Julia's sweet eyes filled, and her soft hand instinctively pressed his at parting to console him. She blushed at herself afterwards; but at the time she was thinking only of him.

Maxley and his wife came up in the evening with a fee. They had put their heads together; and proffered one guinea. "Man and wife be one flesh, you know, Doctor."

Sampson, whose natural choler was constantly checked by his humour, declined this profuse proposal. "Here's vanity!" said he: "now do you really think your two lives are worth a guinea? Why it's 252 pence! 1,008 farthings!"

The pair affected disappointment; vilely.

At all events he must accept this basket of gudgeons Maxley had brought along. Being poisoned was quite out of Maxley's daily routine, and had so unsettled him, that he had got up, and gone fishing to the amazement of the parish.

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Sampson inspected the basket: "Why they are only fish!" said he, "I was in hopes they were pashuts." He accepted the gudgeons, and inquired how Maxley got poisoned. It came out that Mrs. Maxley, seeing her husband set apart a portion of his Welsh rabbit, had "grizzled," and asked what that was for: and being told "for the mouse," and to "mind her own business," had grizzled still more, and furtively conveyed a portion back into the pan for her master's own use. She had been quaking dismally all the afternoon at what she had done; but finding Maxley—hard but just—did not attack her for an involuntary fault, she now brazened it out, and said, "Men didn't ought to have poison in the house unbeknown to their wives. Jem had got no more than he worked for, &c." But, like a woman, she vowed vengeance on the mouse: whereupon Maxley threatened her with the marital correction of neck-twisting, if she laid a finger on it.

"My eyes be open now to what a poor creature do feel as dies poisoned. Let her a be: there's room in our place for her and we."

Next day he met Alfred, and thanked him with warmth, almost with emotion: "There ain't many in Barkington as ever done me a good turn, Master Alfred; you be one on em: you comes after the captain in my book now."

Alfred suggested that his claims were humble compared with Sampson's.

"No, no," said Maxley, going down to his whisper,

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and looking monstrous wise: "Doctor didn't go out of *his*—*business*—for me: you did."

The sage miser's gratitude had not time to die a natural death before circumstances occurred to test it. On the morning of that eventful day, which concluded my last chapter, he received a letter from Canada. His wife was out with eggs; so he caught little Rose Sutton, that had more than once spelled an epistle for him; and she read it out in a loud and reckless whine:

"'At — noon — this—very — daie—Muster—Hardie's a-g-e-n-t—aguent—d-i-s dis, h-o-n—Honou*red* —dis-Honou*red*—a—bill; and sayed.'"

"'There—were no—more—asses.'"

"Mercy on us! but it can't be asses, wench: drive your spe-ad into't again."

"'A-s-s-e-t-s. Assets.'"

"Ah! Go an! go an!"

"'Now—Fatther—if—you—leave—a s-h-i-l-l-i-n-g, shilling — at — Hardie's — after — this—b-l-a-m-e—ble-am—your — self — not — me—for—this—is—the waie—the—r-o-g-u-e-s—rogews — all—bre-ak—they —go—at—a—d-i-s-t-a-n-c-e—distance—first—and—then — at—h-o-m-e — whuoame.—Dear — fatther'— Lawk o' daisy what ails you, Daddy Maxley? You be as white as a Sunday smock. Be you poisoned, again, if *you* please?"

"Worse than that—worse!" groaned Maxley, trembling all over. "Hush!—hold your tongue! Give me that letter! Don't you never tell nobody nothing of

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what you have been a reading to me, and I'll—I'll—I 's only Jem's fun: he is allus running his rigs—that's a good wench now, and I'll give ye a halfpenny."

"La, Daddy," said the child, opening her eyes, "I never heeds what I *re-ads:* I be wrapped up in the spelling. Dear heart, what a sight of long words folks puts in a letter, more than ever drops out of their mouths; which their fingers be longer than their tongues I do suppose."

Maxley hailed this information characteristically. "Then we'll say no more about the halfpenny."

At this, Rose raised a lamentable cry, and pearly tears gushed forth.

"There, there," said Maxley, deprecatingly; "here's two apples for ye; ye can't get them for less: and a halfpenny or a haporth, is all one to you; but it is a great odds to me. And apples they rot; halfpence don't."

It was now nine o'clock. The bank did not open till ten; but Maxley went and hung about the door, to be the first applicant.

As he stood there trembling with fear lest the Bank should not open at all, he thought hard; and the result was a double resolution; he would have his money out to the last shilling; and, this done, would button up his pockets and padlock his tongue. It was not his business to take care of his neighbours; nor to blow the Hardies, if they paid him his money on demand. "So not a word to my missus, nor yet to the town crier," said he.

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Ten o' clock struck, and the Bank shutters remained up. Five minutes more, and the watcher was in agony. Three minutes more, and up came a boy of sixteen whistling, and took down the shutters with an indifference that amazed him. "Bless your handsome face!" said Maxley, with a sigh of relief.

He now summoned all his firmness, and, having recourse to an art, in which these shrewd rusties are supreme, made his face quite inexpressive, and so walked into the Bank the every-day Maxley, externally; but, within, a volcano ready to burst if there should be the slightest hesitation to pay him his money.

"Good morning, Mr. Maxley," said young Skinner.

"Good morning, sir."

"What can we do for you?"

"Oh, I'll wait my turn, sir."

"Well, it is your turn now, if you like."

"How much have you got of mine, if you please, sir."

"Your balance? I'll see. Nine hundred and four pounds."

"Well, sir, then, if *you* please, I'll draa *that*."

"It has come!" thought Skinner. "What, going to desert us?" he stammered.

"No," said the other, trembling inwardly, but not moving a facial muscle: "it is only for a day or two, sir."

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"Ah! I see, going to make a purchase. By-the-by, I believe Mr. Hardie means to offer you some grounds he is buying outside the town: will that suit your book?"

"I dare say it will, sir."

"Then perhaps you will wait till our governor comes in?"

"I have no objection."

"He won't be long. Fine weather for the gardens, Mr. Maxley."

"Moderate, sir. I'll take my money if you please. Counting of it out, that will help pass the time till Muster Hardie comes. You han't made away with it?"

"What d' ye mean, sir?"

"Hardies bain't turned thieves, be they?"

"Are you mad, or intoxicated, Mr. Maxley?"

"Neither, sir: but I wants my own: and I wool have it too: so count out on this here counter, or I'll cry the town round that there door."

"Henry, score James Maxley's name off the books," said Skinner, with cool dignity. But, when he had said this, he was at his wits' end: there were not nine hundred pounds of hard cash in the Bank; nor anything like it.

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CHAPTER II.

SKINNER—called "young" because he had once had a father on the premises—was the mole-catcher. The feelings, with which he had now for some months watched his master grubbing, were curiously mingled. There was the grim sense of superiority every successful Detective feels as he sees the watched one working away unconscious of the eye that is on him; but this was more than balanced by a long habit of obsequious reverence. When A. has been looking up to B. for thirty years, he cannot look down on him all of a sudden, just because he catches him falsifying accounts. Why, man is a cooking animal: commercial man especially.

And then Richard Hardie overpowered Skinner's senses: he was Dignity in person: he was six feet two, and always wore a black surtout buttoned high, and a hat with a brim a little broader than his neighbours, yet not broad enough to be eccentric or slang. He moved down the street touching his hat —while other hats were lifted high to him—a walking column of cash. And when he took off this ebon crown, and sat in the Bank parlour, he gained in

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appearance more than he lost; for then his whole head was seen, long, calm, majestic: that senatorial front, and furrowed face, overawed all comers: even the little sharp-faced clerk would stand and peep at it utterly puzzled between what he knew and what he eyed: nor could he look at that head and face without excusing them; what a lot of money they must have sunk before they came down to fabricating a balance-sheet!

And by-and-by custom somewhat blunted his sense of the dishonesty: and he began to criticise the thing arithmetically instead of morally: that view once admitted, he was charmed with the ability and subtlety of his dignified sharper: and so the mole-catcher began gradually, but effectually, to be corrupted by the mole. He, who watches a dishonest process and does not stop it, is half way towards conniving; who connives, is half way towards abetting.

The next thing was, Skinner felt mortified at his master not trusting him. Did he think old Bob Skinner's son would blow on Hardie after all these years?

This rankled a little, and set him to console himself by admiring his own cleverness in penetrating this great distrustful man. Now of all sentiments Vanity is the most restless and the surest to peep out; Skinner was no sooner inflated, than his demure obsequious manner underwent a certain change; slight and occasional only: but Hardie was

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a subtle man, and the perilous path he was treading made him wonderfully watchful, suspicious, and sagacious: he said to himself, "What has come to Skinner? I must know." So he quietly watched his watcher; and soon satisfied himself he suspected something amiss. From that hour Skinner was a doomed clerk.

It was two o'clock: Hardie had just arrived, and sat in the parlour Cato-like, and cooking.

Skinner was in high spirits: it was owing to his presence of mind the Bank had not been broken some hours ago by Maxley; so now, while concluding his work, he was enjoying by anticipation his employer's gratitude: "he can't hold aloof after this," said Skinner; "he must honour me with his confidence. And I will deserve it. I do deserve it."

A grave, calm, passionless voice invited him into the parlour.

He descended from his desk and went in, swelling with demure complacency.

He found Mr. Hardie seated garbling his accounts with surpassing dignity. The great man handed him an envelope, and cooked majestic on. A wave of that imperial hand, and Skinner had mingled with the past.

For know that the envelope contained three things: a check for a month's wages: a character; and a dismissal, very polite, and equally peremptory.

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Skinner stood paralysed: the complacency died out of his face, and rueful wonder came instead: it was some time before he could utter a word: at last he faltered: "Turn me away, sir? turn away Noah Skinner! your father would never have said such a word to *my* father." Skinner uttered this his first remonstrance in a voice trembling with awe; but gathered courage when he found he had done it, yet lived.

Mr. Hardie evaded his expostulation by a very simple means: he made no reply; but continued his work, dignified as Brutus, inexorable as Fate, cool as Cucumber.

Skinner's anger began to rise. He watched Mr. Hardie in silence, and said to himself, "Curse you! you were born without a heart!"

He waited, however, for some sign of relenting; and, hoping for it, the water came into his own eyes. But Hardie was impassive as ice.

Then the little clerk, mortified to the core, as well as wounded, ground his teeth, and drew a little nearer to this incarnate Arithmetic; and said with an excess of obsequiousness: "Will you condescend to give me a reason for turning me away all in a moment, after five and thirty years' faithful services?"

"Men of business do not deal in reasons," was the cool reply: "it is enough for you that I give you an excellent character, and that we part good friends."

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"That we do not," replied Skinner, sharply: "if we stay together we are friends; but we part enemies, if we do part."

"As you please, Mr. Skinner. I will detain you no longer."

And Mr. Hardie waved him away so grandly, that he started and almost ran to the door. When he felt the handle, it acted like a prop to his heart. He stood firm; and rage supplied the place of steady courage. He clung to the door, and whispered at his master; such a whisper; so loud, so cutting, so full of meaning and malice; it was like a serpent hissing at a man. "But I'll give *you* a reason, a good reason, why you had better not insult me so cruel: and what is more, I'll give you two: and one is that but for me the Bank must have closed this day at ten o'clock—ay, you may stare; it was I saved it, not you—and the other is that, if you make an enemy of me, you are done for. I know too much to be made an enemy of, sir: a great deal too much."

At this, Mr. Hardie raised his head from his book and eyed his crouching venemous assailant full in the face, majestically, as one can fancy a lion rearing his ponderous head, and looking lazily and steadily at a snake that has just hissed in a corner. Each word of Skinner's was a barbed icicle to him; yet not a muscle of his close countenance betrayed his inward suffering.

One thing, however, even he could not master;

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his blood: it retired from that stoical cheek to the chilled and foreboding heart; and the sudden pallor of the resolute face told Skinner his shafts had gone home: "Come, sir," said he, affecting to mingle good fellowship with his defiance; "why bundle me off these premises, when you will be bundled off them yourself before the week is out?"

"You insolent scoundrel! Humph. Explain, Mr. Skinner."

"Ah, what have I warmed your marble up a bit? Yes, I'll explain. The Bank is rotten, and can't last forty-eight hours."

"Oh, indeed! blighted in a day—by the dismissal of Mr. Noah Skinner. Do not repeat that after you have been turned into the streets; or you will be indicted: at present we are confidential: anything more before you quit the rotten Bank?"

"Yes, sir, plenty. I'll tell you your own history, past, present, and to come. The road to riches is hard and rugged to the likes of me; but your good father made it smooth and easy to you, sir; you had only to take the money of a lot of fools that fancy they can't keep it themselves; invest it in Consols and Exchequer bills, live on half the profits, put by the rest, and roll in wealth. But this was too slow, and too sure, for you; you must be Rothschild in a day; so you went into blind speculation, and flung old Mr. Hardie's savings into a well. And now for the last eight months you have been doctoring the ledger;" Hardie winced just perceptibly; "you have

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put down our gains in white, our losses in black, and so you keep feeding your pocket-book and emptying our tills: the pear will soon be ripe, and then you will let it drop, and into the Bankruptcy Court we go. But, what you forget, fraudulent Bankruptcy isn't the turnpike way of trade: it is a broad road, but a crooked one: skirts the prison wall, sir, and sights the herring pond."

An agony went across Mr. Hardie's great face; and seemed to furrow as it ran.

"Not but what *you* are all right, sir," resumed his little cat-like tormentor, letting him go a little way, to nail him again by-and-by: "you have cooked the books in time; and Cocker was a fool to you. 'Twill be all down in black and white. Great sacrifices: no reserve: creditors take everything; dividend fourpence in the pound, furniture of house and bank, Mrs. Hardie's portrait, and down to the coalscuttle. Bankrupt saves nothing but his honour, and —— the six thousand pounds or so he has stitched into his old great-coat; hands his new one to the official assignees, like an honest man."

Hardie uttered something between a growl and a moan.

"Now comes the per contra: poor little despised Noah Skinner has kept genuine books, while you have been preparing false ones. I took the real figures home every afternoon on loose leaves: and bound 'em: and very curious they will read in Court alongside of yours. I did it for amusement o'

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nights; I'm so solitary, and so fond of figures: I must try and turn them to profit; for I'm out of place now in my old age. Dearee me! how curious that you should go and pick out me of all men, to turn into the street like a dog—like a dog—like a dog."

Hardie turned his head away; and, in that moment of humiliation and abject fear, drank all the bitterness of moral death.

His manhood urged him to defy Skinner and return to the straight path, cost what it might. But how could he? His own books were all falsified. He could place a true *total* before his creditors by simply adding the contents of his secret hoard to the assets of the Bank; but with this true arithmetical result he could not square his books, except by conjectural and fabricated details, which would be detected, and send him to prison; for who would believe he was lying in figures only to get back to the truth? No, he had entangled himself in his own fraud, and was at the mercy of his servant. He took his line. "Skinner, it was your interest to leave me whilst the Bank stood; then you would have got a place directly; but since you take umbrage at my dismissing you for your own good, I must punish you—by keeping you."

"I am quite ready to stay and serve you, sir," replied Skinner hastily: "and as for my angry words, think no more of them! It went to my heart to be turned away at the very time you need me most."

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("Hypocritical rogue!") thought Hardie. "That is true, Skinner," said he; "I do indeed need a faithful and sympathising servant, to advise, support, and aid me. Ask yourself whether any man in England needs a confidant more than I! It was bitter at first to be discovered even by you: but now I am glad you know all; for I see I have undervalued your ability as well as your zeal."

Thus Mr. Hardie bowed his pride to flatter Skinner: and soon saw by the little fellow's heightened colour that this was the way to make him a clerk of wax.

The Banker and his clerk were reconciled. Then the latter was invited to commit himself by carrying on the culinary process in his own hand. He trembled a little: but complied, and so became an accomplice; on this his master took him into his confidence, and told him everything it was impossible to hide from him.

"And now, sir," said Skinner, "let me tell you what I did for you this morning. Then perhaps you won't wonder at my being so peppery. Maxley *suspects:* he came here and drew out every shilling. I was all in a perspiration what to do. But I put a good face on, and——"

Skinner then confided to his principal how he had evaded Maxley, and saved the Bank; and the stratagem seemed so incredible and droll, that they both laughed over it long and loud. And in fact it turned out a first-rate practical jest; cost two lives.

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While they were laughing, the young clerk looked in, and said, "Captain Dodd, to speak with you, sir!"

"Captain Dodd!!!" And all Mr. Hardie's forced merriment died away, and his face betrayed his vexation for once. "Did you go and tell him I was here?"

"Yes, sir: I had no orders; and he said you would be sure to see *him*."

"Unfortunate! Well, you may show him in, when I ring your bell."

The youngster being gone, Mr. Hardie explained to his new ally in a few hurried words the danger that threatened him from Miss Julia Dodd. "And now," said he, "the women have sent her father to soften his. I shall be told his girl will die if she can't have my boy, &c. As if I care who lives or dies."

On this Skinner got up all in a hurry, and offered to go into the office.

"On no account," said Mr. Hardie, sharply, "I shall make my business with you the excuse for cutting this love-nonsense mighty short. Take your book to the desk, and seem buried in it."

He then touched the bell, and both confederates fell into an attitude: never were a pair so bent over their little accounts; lies, like themselves.

Instead of the heartbroken father their comedy awaited, in came the gallant sailor with a brown cheek reddened by triumph and excitement, and almost shouted in a genial jocund voice, "How d'ye do, sir? It is a long time since I came across your

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hawse." And with this he held out his hand cordially. Hardie gave his mechanically, and remained on his guard; but somewhat puzzled. Dodd shook his cold hand heartily. "Well, sir, here I am, just come ashore, and visiting you before my very wife: what d'ye think of that?"

"I am highly honoured, sir," said Hardie: then, rather stiffly and incredulously, "and to what may I owe this extraordinary preference? Will you be good enough to state the purport of this visit—briefly—as Mr. Skinner and I are much occupied."

"The purport? Why what does one come to a banker about? I have got a lot of money I want to get rid of."

Hardie stared; but was as much on his guard as ever; only more and more puzzled.

Then David winked at him with simple cunning, took out his knife, undid his shirt, and began to cut the threads which bound the Cash to his flannel.

At this Skinner wheeled round on his stool to look, and both he and Mr. Hardie inspected the unusual pantomime with demure curiosity.

Dodd next removed the oilskin cover, and showed the pocket-book, brought it down with a triumphant smack on the hollow of his hand, and, in the pride of his heart, the joy of his bosom, and the fever of his blood—for there were two red spots on his cheek all the time—told the cold pair Its adventures in a few glowing words; the Calcutta firm,—the two pirates,—the hurricane,—the wreck,—the land sharks,—he

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had saved It from. "And here It is, safe in spite of them all. But I won't carry It on me any more; it is unlucky: so you must be so good as to take charge of It for me, sir."

"Very well, Captain Dodd. You wish it placed to Mrs. Dodd's account, I suppose."

"No! no! I have nothing to do with that: this is between you and me."

"As you please."

"Ye see it is a good lump, sir."

"Oh, indeed!" said Hardie, a little sneeringly.

"I call it a thundering lot o' money. But I suppose it is not much to a rich banker like you." Then he lowered his voice, and said with a certain awe: "It's—fourteen—thousand—pounds."

"Fourteen thousand pounds!!!" cried Hardie. Then with sudden and consummate coolness, "Why certainly an established bank like this deals with more considerable deposits than that. Skinner, why don't you give the captain a chair?"

"No, no!" said Dodd. "I'll heave to till I get this off my mind; but I won't anchor anywhere but at home." He then opened the pocket-book and spread the contents out before Mr. Hardie, who ran over the notes and bills, and said the amount was 14,010*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.*

Dodd asked for a receipt.

"Why, it is not usual, when there is an account."

Dodd's countenance fell: "Oh, I should not like to part with it, unless I had a receipt."

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"You mistake me," said Hardie, with a smile. "An entry in your Banker's book is a receipt. However, you can have one in another form." He then unlocked a desk; took out a banker's receipt; and told Skinner to fill it in. This done, he seemed to be absorbed in some more important matter.

Skinner counted the notes and left them with Mr. Hardie: the bills he took to his desk to note them on the back of the receipt. Whilst he was writing this with his usual slowness and precision, poor Dodd's heart overflowed: "It is my children's fortune, ye see: I don't look on a sixpence of it as mine: that it is what made me so particular. It belongs to my little Julia, bless her!—she is a rosebud if ever there was one; and oh, such a heart; and so fond of her poor father; but not fonder than he is of her—and to my dear boy Edward; he is the honestest young chap you ever saw: what he says, you may swear to, with your eyes shut; but how could they miss either good looks or good hearts; and *her* children? the best wife and the best mother in England! She has been a true consort to me this many a year, and I to her, in deep water and shoal, let the wind blow high or low. Here is a Simple Simon vaunting his own flesh and blood! No wonder that little gentleman there is grinning at me: well, grin away, lad! perhaps you haven't got any children. But you have, sir: and you know how it is with us fathers; our hearts are so full of the little darlings, out it must come. *You* can

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understand how joyful I feel at saving their fortune from land sharks and sea sharks, and landing it safe in an honest man's hands, like you, and your father before you."

Skinner handed him the receipt.

He cast his eye over it. "All right, little gentleman! Now my heart is relieved of such a weight: I feel to have just cleared out a cargo of bricks. Good-bye! shake hands! I wish you were as happy as I am. I wish all the world was happy. God bless you! God bless you both!"

And with this burst he was out of the room, and making ardently for Albion Villa.

The Banker and his clerk turned round on their seats and eyed one another a long time in silence, and amazement.

Was this thing a dream? their faces seemed to ask.

Then Mr. Hardie rested his senatorial head on his hand, and pondered deeply. Skinner too reflected on this strange freak of Fortune: and the result was that he burst in on his principal's reverie with a joyful shout: "The Bank is saved! Hardie's is good for another hundred years."

The Banker started, for Skinner's voice sounded like a pistol shot in his ear, so high strung was he with thought.

"Hush! hush!" he said: and pondered again in silence.

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No. 17 Barkington Nov 16 1847

Received of David Dodd Esq the sum of Fourteen thousand and ten pounds twelve shillings and six pence

to account for on demand

For Richard Hardie

Noah Skinner

£14010 „ 12 „ 6

Brice p. 32. Vol. II.

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At last he turned to Skinner. "You think our course is plain? I tell you it is so dark and complicated it would puzzle Solomon to know what is best to be done."

"Save the Bank, sir! whatever you do."

"How can I save the Bank with a few thousand pounds I must refund when called on? You look keenly into what is under your eye, Skinner; but you cannot see a yard beyond your nose. Let me think."

After a while he took a sheet of paper, and jotted down "the materials," as he called them, and read them out to his accomplice:

"1. A bank too far gone to be redeemed: a trap; a well. If I throw this money into it, I shall ruin Captain Dodd, and do myself no good, but only my creditors.

"2. Miss Julia Dodd, virtual proprietor of this 14,000*l.*: or of the greater part, if I choose. The child that marries first usually jockeys the other.

"3. Alfred Hardie, my son, and my creditor, deep in love with No. 2, and at present somewhat alienated from me by my thwarting a silly love affair; which bids fair to improve into a sound negotiation.

"4. The 14,000*l.* paid to me personally after Banking hours, and not entered on the banking books, nor known but to you and me.

"Now suppose I treat this advance as a personal

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trust? The Bank breaks: the money disappears. Consternation of the Dodds, who, until enlightened by the public settlement, will think it has gone into the well.

"In that interval I talk Alfred over: and promise to produce the 14,000*l.* intact, with my paternal blessing on him and Miss Dodd; provided he will release me from my debt to him, and give me a life interest in half the money settled on him by my wife's father to my most unjust and insolent exclusion. Their passion will soon bring the young people to reason: and then they will soon melt the old ones."

Skinner was struck with this masterly little sketch. But he detected one fatal flaw: "You don't say what is to become of me."

"Oh, I haven't thought of that yet."

"But do think of it, sir! that I may have the pleasure of co-operating. It would never do for you and me to be pulling two ways, you know."

"I will not forget you," said Hardie, wincing under the chain this little wretch held him with, and had jerked him by way of reminder. "But surely, Skinner, you agree with me it would be a sin and a shame to rob this honest captain of his money—for my creditors; curse them! Ah, you are not a father. How quickly he found that out! Well, I am: and he touched me to the quick: I love my little Jane as dearly as he loves his Julia, every bit: and I feel for *him*. And then he put me

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in mind of my own father; poor man. That seems strange, doesn't it? a sailor and a banker! Ah! it was because they were both honest men. Yes, it was like a wholesome flower coming into a close room, and then out again and leaving a whiff behind, was that sailor. He left the savour of Probity and Simplicity behind, though he took the things themselves away again. Why, why couldn't he leave us what is more wanted here than even his money? His integrity: the pearl of price, that my father, whom I used to sneer at, carried to his grave; and died simple, but wise; honest, but rich; rich in money, in credit, in honour, and eternal hopes: oh, Skinner! Skinner! I wish I had never been born."

Skinner was surprised: he was not aware that intelligent men, who sin, are subject to fits of remorse: nay, more, he was frightened; for the emotion of this iron man, so hard to move, was overpowering when it came: it did not soften, it convulsed him.

"Don't talk so, sir," said the little clerk. "Keep up your heart! Have a drop of something."

"You are right," said Mr. Hardie, gloomily; "it is idle to talk: we are all the slaves of circumstances."

With this, he unlocked a safe that stood against the wall, chucked the 14,000*l.* in, and slammed the iron door sharply; and, as it closed upon the Cash with a clang, the parlour door burst open as if by

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concert, and David Dodd stood on the threshold, looking terrible. His ruddy colour was all gone, and he seemed black and white with anger and anxiety. And out of this blanched, yet lowering face, his eyes glowed like coals, and roved keenly to and fro between the Banker and the clerk.

A thunder-cloud of a man.

CHAPTER III.

JAMES MAXLEY came out of the Bank that morning with nine hundred and four pounds buttoned up tight in the pocket of his leather breeches, a joyful man; and so to his work; and home at one o'clock to dinner.

At 2 P.M. he was thoughtful; uneasy at 3; wretched at 3:30.

He was gardener as well as capitalist: and Mr. Hardie owed him thirty shillings for work.

Such is human nature in general, and Maxley's in particular, that the 900*l.* in pocket seemed small, and the 30*s.* in jeopardy, large.

"I can't afford to go with the creditors," argued Maxley: "dividend on thirty shillings? why, that will be about thirty pence; the change for a hard half-crown.

He stuck his spade in the soil and made for his debtor's house. As he came up the street, Dodd

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shot out of the Bank radiant, and was about to pass him without notice, full of his wife and children: but Maxley stopped him with a right cordial welcome, and told him he had given them all a fright this time.

"What, is it over the town already, that my ship has been wrecked?" And Dodd looked annoyed.

"Wrecked? No; but you have been due this two months, ye know. Wrecked? Why captain, you haven't ever been wrecked?" And he looked him all over as if he expected to see "WRECKED" branded on him by the elements.

"Ay, James, wrecked on the French coast, and lost my chronometer, and a tip-top sextant. But what of that? I saved *It*. I have just landed It in the Bank. Good-bye: I must sheer off; I long to be home."

"Stay a bit, captain," said Maxley: "I am not quite easy in my mind; I saw you come out of Hardie's; I thought in course you had been in to draa: but you says different. Now what was it you did leave behind you at that there shop, if *you* please: not money?"

"Not money? Only fourteen thousand pounds. How the man stares! Why, it's not mine, James; it's my children's: there, good-bye;" and he was actually off this time. But Maxley stretched his long limbs, and caught him in two strides, and griped his shoulder without ceremony: "Be you mad?" said he, sternly.

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"No, but I begin to think you are."

"That is to be seen," said Maxley, gravely. "Before I lets you go, you must tell me whether you be jesting, or whether you have really been so simple as to drop fourteen—thousand—pounds at Hardie's?" No judge upon the bench, nor bishop in his stall, could be more impressive than this gardener was, when he subdued the vast volume of his voice to a low grave utterance of this sort.

Dodd began to be uneasy: "Why, good Heavens, there is nothing wrong with the old Barkington Bank?"

"Nothing wrong?" roared Maxley: then whispered: "Holt! I was laad once for slander, and cost me thirty pounds: nearly killed my missus it did."

"Man!" cried Dodd, "for my children's sake tell me if you know anything amiss. After all, I'm like a stranger here; more than two years away at a time."

"I'll tell you all I know," whispered Maxley, "'tis the least I can do. What (roaring) do—you—think—I've forgotten you saving my poor boy out o' that scrape, and getting him a good place in Canada, and—why, he'd have been put in prison but for you, and that would ha' broken my heart and his mother's—and——" The stout voice began to quaver.

"Oh, bother all that now," said Dodd, impatiently. "The Bank! you have grounded me on thorns."

"Well, I'll tell ye: but you must promise faithful not to go and say I told ye, or you'll get me

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laad again: and I likes to laa *them*, not for *they* to laa me."

"I promise, I promise."

"Well then, I got a letter to-day from my boy, him as you was so good to, and here 'tis in my breeches-pocket.—Laws! how things do come round sure*ly*: why, lookee here now, if so be *you* hadn't been a good friend to *he*, *he* wouldn't be where he is, and if so be *he* warn't where *he* is, *he* couldn't have writ *me* this here, and then where should *you* and *I* be?"

"Belay your jaw and show me this letter," cried David, trembling all over.

"That I wool," said Maxley, diving a hand into his pocket. "Hush! lookee yander now; if there ain't Master Alfred a watching of us two out of his window: and he have got an eye like a hawk, *he* have. Step in the passage, captain, and I'll show it you."

He drew him aside into the passage, and gave him the letter. Dodd ran his eye over it hastily, uttered a cry like a wounded lion, dropped it, gave a slight stagger, and rushed away.

Maxley picked up his letter and watched Dodd into the Bank again; and reflected on his work. His heart was warmed at having made a return to the good captain.

His head suggested that he was on the road which leads to libel.

But he had picked up at the assizes a smattering

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of the law of evidence; so he coolly tore the letter in pieces. "There now," said he to himself, "if Hardies do laa me for publishing of this here letter, why they pours their water into a sieve. Ugh!" And with this exclamation he started, and then put his heavy boot on part of the letter, and ground it furtively into the mud; for a light hand had settled on his shoulder, and a keen young face was close to his.

It was Alfred Hardie, who had stolen on him like a cat. "I'm laad," thought Maxley.

"Maxley, old fellow," said Alfred, in a voice as coaxing as a woman's, "are you in a good humour?"

"Well, Master Halfred, sight of you mostly puts me in one, especially after that there strychnine job."

"Then tell me," whispered Alfred, his eyes sparkling, and his face beaming, "who was that you were talking to just now?—was it?—wasn't it?—who was it?"

CHAPTER IV.

WHILE Dodd stood lowering in the doorway, he was nevertheless making a great effort to control his agitation.

At last he said in a stern but low voice, in which, however, a quick ear might detect a tremor of agitation: "I have changed my mind, sir: I want my money back."

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At this, though David's face had prepared him, Mr. Hardie's heart sank: but there was no help for it: he said faintly: "Certainly. May I ask——?" and there he stopped; for it was hardly prudent to ask anything.

"No matter," replied Dodd, his agitation rising even at this slight delay: "come! my money! I must and will have it."

Hardie drew himself up majestically. "Captain Dodd, this is a strange way of demanding what nobody here disputes."

"Well, I beg your pardon," said Dodd, a little awed by his dignity and fairness: "but I can't help it."

The quick, supple, Banker, saw the slight advantage he had gained, and his mind went into a whirl: what should he do? It was death to part with this money and gain nothing by it: sooner tell Dodd of the love affair; and open a treaty on this basis: he clung to this money like limpet to its rock; and so intense and rapid were his thoughts and schemes how to retain it a little longer, that David's apologies buzzed in his ear like the drone of a beetle.

The latter went on to say: "You see, sir, it's my children's fortune, my boy Edward's, and my little Julia's: and so many have been trying to get it from me, that my blood boils up in a moment about it now.—My poor head!—You don't seem to understand what I am saying; there then, I am a sailor;

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I can't go beating and tacking, like you landsmen, with the wind dead astarn; the long and the short is, I don't feel it safe here: don't feel it safe anywhere, except in my wife's lap. So no more words: here's your receipt; give me my money."

"Certainly, Captain Dodd. Call to-morrow morning at the Bank, and it will be paid on demand in the regular way: the Bank opens at ten o'clock."

"No, no; I can't wait. I should be dead of anxiety before then. Why not pay it me here, and now? You took it here."

"We receive deposits till four o'clock; but we do not disburse after three. This is the system of all Banks."

"That is all nonsense: if you are open to receive money, you are open to pay it."

"My dear sir, if you were not entirely ignorant of business, you would be aware that these things are not done in this way: money received is passed to account, and the cashier is the only person who can honour your draft on it: but, stop; if the cashier is in the Bank, we may manage it for you yet: Skinner, run and see whether he has left: and, if not, send him in to me directly." The cashier took his cue, and ran out.

David was silent.

The cashier speedily returned, saying, with a disappointed air: "The cashier has been gone this quarter of an hour."

David maintained an ominous silence.

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"That is unfortunate," remarked Hardie. "But, after all, it is only till to-morrow morning: still I regret this circumstance, sir; and I feel that all these precautions we are obliged to take must seem unreasonable to you: but experience dictates this severe routine; and, were we to deviate from it, our friends' money would not be so safe in our hands as it always has been at present."

David eyed him sternly, but let him run on. When he had concluded his flowing periods, David said quietly: "So you can't give me my own, because your cashier has carried it away?"

Hardie smiled: "No, no; but because he has locked it up; and carried away the key."

"It is not in this room, then?"

"No."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive."

"What, not in that safe of yours, there?"

"Certainly not," said Hardie, stoutly.

"Open the safe: the keys are in it."

"Open the safe? What for?"

"To show me It is not in the right hand partition of that safe; there: there." And David pointed at the very place where it was.

The dignified Mr. Hardie felt ready to sink with shame: a kind of shudder passed through him, and he was about to comply, heart-sick: but then wounded pride and the rage of disappointment, stung him, and he turned in defiance: "You are im-

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pertinent, sir: and I shall not reward your curiosity and your insolence by showing you the contents of my safes."

"My money! my money!" cried David, fiercely: "no more words, for I sha'n't listen to them: I know you now for what you are; a thief. I *saw* you put It into that safe: a liar is always a thief. You want to steal my children's money: I'll have your life first. My money! ye pirate! or I'll strangle you." And he advanced upon him purple with rage, and shot out his long threatening arm, and brown fingers working in the air. "D'ye know what I did to a French land shark that tried to rob me of It? I throttled him with these fingers till his eyes and his tongue started out of him; he came for my children's money, and I killed him so—so—so—as I'll kill you, you thief! you liar! you scoundrel!"

His face black and convulsed with rage, and his outstretched fingers working convulsively, and hungering for a rogue's throat, made the resolute Hardie quake; he whipped out of the furious man's way, and got to the safe pale and trembling. "Hush! no violence!" he gasped: "I'll give you your money this moment, you ruffian."

While he unlocked the safe with trembling hands, Dodd stood like a man petrified; his arm and fingers stretched out and threatening; and Skinner saw him pull at his necktie furiously, like one choking.

Hardie got the notes and bills all in a hurry, and held them out to Dodd.

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In which act, to his consternation, and surprise, and indignation, he received a back-handed blow on the eye that dazzled him for an instant; and there was David with his arms struggling wildly, and his fists clenched, his face purple, and his eyes distorted so that little was seen but the whites; the next moment his teeth gnashed loudly together, and he fell headlong on the floor with a concussion so momentous, that the windows rattled, and the room shook violently; while the dust rose in a cloud.

A loud ejaculation burst from Hardie and Skinner.

And then there was an awful silence.

CHAPTER V.

When David fell senseless on the floor Mr. Hardie was somewhat confused by the back-handed blow from his convulsed and whirling arm. But Skinner ran to him, held up his head, and whipped off his neckcloth.

Then Hardie turned to seize the bell and ring for assistance; but Skinner shook his head and said it was useless; this was no faint: old Betty could not help him.

"It is a bad day's work, sir," said he, trembling: "he is a dead man."

"Dead? Heaven forbid!"

"Apoplexy!" whispered Skinner.

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"Run for a doctor then: lose no time: don't let us have his blood on our hands.—Dead?"

And he repeated the word this time in a very different tone; a tone too strange and significant to escape Skinner's quick ear. However, he laid David's head gently down, and rose from his knees to obey.

What did he see now, but Mr. Hardie, with his back turned, putting the notes and bills softly into the safe again out of sight. He saw, comprehended, and took his own course with equal rapidity.

"Come, run!" cried Mr. Hardie; "I'll take care of him; every moment is precious."

("Wants to get rid of me!") thought Skinner. "No, sir," said he, "be ruled by me: let us take him to his friends: he won't live; and we shall get all the blame if we doctor him."

Already egotism had whispered Hardie, "How lucky if he should die!" and now a still guiltier thought flashed through him: he did not try to conquer it; he only trembled at himself for entertaining it.

"At least give him air!" said he, in a quavering voice, consenting in a crime, yet compromising with his conscience, feebly.

He threw the window open with great zeal, with prodigious zeal; for he wanted to deceive himself as well as Skinner. With equal parade he helped carry Dodd to the window; it opened on the ground: this done, the self-deceivers put their heads together, and

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soon managed matters so that two porters, known to Skinner, were introduced into the garden, and informed that a gentleman had fallen down in a fit, and they were to take him home to his friends, and not talk about it: there might be an inquest, and that was so disagreeable to a gentleman like Mr. Hardie. The men agreed at once for a sovereign apiece. It was all done in a great hurry and agitation, and while Skinner accompanied the men to see that they did not blab, Mr. Hardie went into the garden to breathe and think. But he could do neither.

He must have a look at It.

He stole back, opened the safe, and examined the notes and bills.

He fingered them.

They seemed to grow to his finger.

He lusted after them.

He said to himself, "The matter has gone too far to stop; I *must* go on borrowing this money of the Dodds; and make it the basis of a large fortune: it will be best for all parties in the end."

He put It into his pocket-book; that pocket-book into his breast-pocket; and passed by his private door into the house: and to his dressing-room.

Ten minutes later he left the house with a little black bag in his hand.

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CHAPTER VI.

"WHAT will ye give me, and I'll tell ye," said Maxley to Alfred Hardie.

"Five pounds."

"That is too much."

"Five shillings, then."

"That is too little. Lookee here, your garden owes me thirty shillings for work: suppose you pays me, and that will save me from going to your Dad for it."

Alfred consented readily, and paid the money. Then Maxley told him it was Captain Dodd he had been talking with.

"I thought so! I thought so!" cried Alfred, joyfully, "but I was afraid to believe it: it was too delightful: Maxley, you're a trump: you don't know what anxiety you have relieved me of; some fool has gone and reported the Agra wrecked; look here!" and he showed him his Lloyd's; "luckily it has only just come; so I haven't been miserable long."

"Well, to be sure, news flies fast now-a-days. He have been wrecked, for that matter." He then surprised Alfred by telling him all he had just learned

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from Dodd; and was going to let out about the fourteen thousand pounds, when he recollected this was the Banker's son; and while he was talking to him, it suddenly struck Maxley that this young gentleman would come down in the world, should the bank break: and then the Dodds, he concluded, judging others by himself, would be apt to turn their backs on him. Now he liked Alfred, and was disposed to do him a good turn, when he could without hurting James Maxley. "Mr. Alfred," said he, "I know the world better than you do: you be ruled by me, or you'll rue it: you put on your Sunday coat this minute; and off like a shot to Albyn Villee; you'll get there before the captain: he have got a little business to do first; that is neither here nor there: besides, you are young and lissom. You be the first to tell Missus Dodd the good news; and, when the captain comes, there sets you aside Miss Julee: and don't you be shy and shamefaced: take him when his heart is warm, and tell him why you are there: 'I love her dear,' says you. He be only a sailor, and they never has no sense nor prudence: he is a'most sure to take you by the hand, at such a time: and once you get his word, he'll stand good, to his own hurt; he's one of that sort, bless his silly old heart."

A good deal of this was unintelligible to Alfred; but the advice seemed good; advice generally does when it squares with our own wishes: he thanked Maxley, left him, made a hasty toilet, and ran to Albion Villa.

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Sarah opened the door to him; in tears.

The news of the wreck had come to Albion Villa just half an hour ago; and in that half hour they had tasted more misery than hitherto their peaceful lot had brought them in years. Mrs. Dodd was praying and crying in her room; Julia had put on her bonnet, and was descending in deep distress and agitation, to go down to the quay and learn more if possible.

Alfred saw her on the stairs, and at sight of her pale, agitated face, flew to her.

She held out both hands piteously to him: "Oh Alfred!"

"Good news!" he panted. "He is alive; Maxley has seen him—I have seen him—He will be here directly—my own love—dry your eyes—calm your fears—He is safe; he is well: hurrah! hurrah!"

The girl's pale face flushed red with hope, then pale again with emotion, then rosy red with transcendent joy: "Oh, bless you! bless you!" she murmured, in her sweet gurgle so full of heart: then took his head passionately with both her hands, as if she was going to kiss him: uttered a little inarticulate cry of love and gratitude over him, then turned and flew up the stairs, crying "Mamma! mamma!" and burst into her mother's room. When two such Impetuosities meet, as Alfred and Julia, expect quick work.

What happened in Mrs. Dodd's room may be imagined: and soon both ladies came hastily out to

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Alfred, and he found himself in the drawing-room seated between them, and holding a hand of each, and playing the man delightfully, soothing and assuring them; Julia believed him at a word, and beamed with unmixed delight and anticipation of the joyful meeting; Mrs. Dodd cost him more trouble: her soft hand trembled still in his; and she put question upon question. But, when he told her he with his own eyes had seen Captain Dodd talking to Maxley, and gathered from Maxley he had been shipwrecked on the coast of France, and lost his chronometer and his sextant, these details commanded credit; bells were rung: the captain's dressing-room ordered to be got ready; the cook put on her mettle, and Alfred invited to stay and dine with the long-expected one: and the house of mourning became the house of joy.

"And then it was he who brought the good news," whispered Julia to her mother; "and that is so sweet."

"Yes, dear," said Mrs. Dodd, "he will make even me love him. The 14,000*l.*! I hope that was not lost in the wreck."

"Oh, mamma! who cares? when his own dear, sweet, precious life has been in danger, and is mercifully preserved. Why does he not come? I shall scold him for keeping us waiting: you know I am not a bit afraid of him, though he is papa: indeed, I am ashamed to say, I govern him with a rod of, no matter what. Do, do, do let us all three put on our

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bonnets, and run and meet him. I want him so to love somebody the very first day."

Mrs. Dodd said, "Well: wait a few minutes, and then, if he is not here, you two shall go. I dare hardly trust myself to meet my darling husband in the open street."

Julia ran to Alfred: "If he does not come in ten minutes, you and I may go and meet him."

"You are an angel," murmured Alfred.

"You are another," said Julia, haughtily. "Oh dear, I can't sit down: and I don't want flattery, I want papa. A waltz! a waltz! then one can go mad with joy without startling propriety; I can't answer for the consequences if I don't let off a little, little, happiness."

"That I will," said Mrs. Dodd; "for I am as happy as you, and happier." She played a waltz.

Julia's eyes were a challenge: Alfred started up and took her ready hand, and soon the gay young things were whirling round, the happiest pair in England.

But in the middle of the joyous whirl, Julia's quick ear on the watch all the time, heard the gate swing to: she glided like an eel from Alfred's arm, and ran to the window. Arrived there, she made three swift vertical bounds like a girl with a skipping rope, only her hands were clapping in the air at the same time; then down the stairs, screaming: "His chest! his chest! he is coming, coming, come."

Alfred ran after her.

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Mrs. Dodd, unable to race with such antelopes, slipped quietly out into the little balcony.

Julia had seen two men carrying a trestle with a tarpaulin over it, and a third walking beside. Dodd's heavy sea chest had been more than once carried home this way. She met the men at the door, and overpowered them with questions:

"Is it his clothes? then he wasn't so much wrecked after all. Is he with you? is he coming directly? Why don't you tell me?"

The porters at first wore the stolid impassive faces of their tribe: but, when this bright young creature questioned them, brimming over with ardour and joy, their countenances fell, and they hung their heads.

The little sharp-faced man, who was walking beside the other, stepped forward to reply to Julia.

He was interrupted by a terrible scream from the balcony.

Mrs. Dodd was leaning wildly over it, with dilating eyes, and quivering hand that pointed down to the other side of the trestle: "Julia!! Julia!!"

Julia ran round, and stood petrified, her pale lips apart, and all her innocent joy frozen in a moment.

The tarpaulin was scanty there, and a man's hand and part of his arm dangled helpless out.

The hand was blanched: and wore a well known ring.

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CHAPTER VII.

In the terror and confusion no questions were then asked: Alfred got to David's head, and told Skinner to take his feet; Mrs. Dodd helped, and they carried him up and laid him on her bed. The servant girls cried, and wailed, and were of little use; Mrs. Dodd hurried them off for medical aid, and she and Julia, though pale as ghosts, and trembling in every limb, were tearless, and almost silent, and did all for the best: they undid a shirt button, that confined his throat: they set his head high, and tried their poor little eau-de-Cologne and feminine remedies: and each of them held an insensible hand in both hers, clasping it piteously and trying to hold him tight, so that Death should not take him away from them.

"My son, where is my son?" sighed Mrs. Dodd.

Alfred threw his arm round her neck: "You have one son here: what shall I do?"

The next minute he was running to the telegraph office for her.

At the gate he found Skinner hanging about, and asked him hurriedly how the calamity had happened. Skinner said Captain Dodd had fallen down senseless

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in the street, and he had passed soon after, recognised him, and brought him home; "I have paid the men, sir; I wouldn't let them ask the ladies at such a time."

"Oh, thank you! thank you, Skinner! I will repay you; it is me you have obliged." And Alfred ran off with the words in his mouth.

Skinner looked after him and muttered: "I forgot *him*. It is a nice mess. Wish I was out of it." And he went back, hanging his head, to Alfred's father.

Mr. Osmond met him; Skinner turned and saw him enter the villa.

Mr. Osmond came softly into the room, examined Dodd's eye, felt his pulse, and said he must be bled at once.

Mrs. Dodd was averse to this: "Oh, let us try everything else first," said she; but Osmond told her there was no other remedy: "All the functions we rely on in the exhibition of medicines are suspended."

Dr. Short now drove up, and was ushered in.

Mrs. Dodd asked him imploringly whether it was necessary to bleed. But Dr. Short knew his business too well to be entrapped into an independent opinion where a surgeon had been before him. He drew Mr. Osmond apart, and inquired what he had recommended: this ascertained, he turned to Mrs. Dodd, and said, "I advise venesection, or cupping."

"Oh, Dr. Short, pray have pity and order some-

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thing less terrible. Dr. Sampson is so averse to bleeding."

"Sampson? Sampson? never heard of him."

"It is the chronothermal man," said Osmond.

"Oh, ah! but this is too serious a case to be quacked. Coma, with stertor, and a full, bounding pulse, indicates liberal blood letting. I would try venesection; then cup, if necessary, or leech the temple: I need not say, sir, calomel must complete the cure. The case is simple; and, at present, surgical; I leave it in competent hands." And he retired, leaving the inferior practitioner well pleased with him and with himself; no insignificant part of a physician's art.

When he was gone, Mr. Osmond told Mrs. Dodd that however crotchety Dr. Sampson might be, he was an able man, and had very properly resisted the indiscriminate use of the lancet: the profession owed him much. "But in apoplexy the leech and the lancet are still our sheet anchors."

Mrs. Dodd uttered a faint shriek: "Apoplexy! Oh, David! Oh, my darling; have you come home for this?"

Osmond assured her apoplexy was not necessarily fatal; provided the cerebral blood vessels were relieved in time by depletion.

The fixed eye, and terrible stertorous breathing on the one hand, and the promise of relief on the other, overpowered Mrs. Dodd's reluctance. She sent Julia out of the room on a pretext; and then consented

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with tears to David's being bled. But she would not yield to leave the room; no; this tender woman nerved herself to see her husband's blood flow, sooner than risk his being bled too much by the hard hand of custom. Let the peevish fools, who make their own troubles in love, compare their slight and merited pangs with this; she was his true lover and his wife; yet there she stood with eye horror-stricken yet unflinching, and saw the stab of the little lancet, and felt it deeper than she would a javelin through her own body; and watched the blood run that was dearer to her far than her own.

At the first prick of the lancet David shivered, and, as the blood escaped, his eye unfixed, and the pupils contracted and dilated, and once he sighed. "Good sign that!" said Osmond.

"Oh, that is enough, sir," said Mrs. Dodd: "we shall faint if you take any more."

Osmond closed the vein, observing that a local bleeding would do the rest. When he had stanched the blood, Mrs. Dodd sank half fainting in her chair; by some marvellous sympathy it was she who had been bled, and whose vein was now closed. Osmond sprinkled water in her face: she thanked him, and said sweetly, "You see I could not have lost any more."

When it was over she came to tell Julia; she found her sitting on the stairs crying, and pale as marble. She suspected. And there was Alfred

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hanging over her, and in agony at her grief; out came his love for her in words and accents unmistakable, and this in Osmond's hearing and the maid's.

"Oh, hush! hush!" cried poor Mrs. Dodd, and her face was seen to burn through her tears.

And this was the happy, quiet, little villa of my opening chapters.

Ah, Richard Hardie! Richard Hardie!

The patient was cupped on the nape of the neck by Mr. Osmond, and, on the glasses drawing, showed signs of consciousness, and the breathing was relieved: these favourable symptoms were neither diminished nor increased by the subsequent application of the cupping needles.

"We have turned the corner," said Mr. Osmond, cheerfully.

Rap! rap! rap! came a telegraphic message from Dr. Sampson, and was brought up to the sick room.

"Out visiting patients when yours came. In apoplexy with a red face and stertorous breathing put the feet in mustard bath and dash much cold water on the head from above. On revival give emetic: cure with sulphate of quinine. In apoplexy with a white face treat as for a simple faint: here emetic dangerous. In neither apoplexy bleed. Coming down by train."

This message added to Mrs. Dodd's alarm; the whole treatment varied so from what had been done.

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She faltered her misgivings; Osmond reassured her. "Not bleed in apoplexy!" said he, superciliously, "why, it is the universal practice. Judge for yourself. You see the improvement."

Mrs. Dodd admitted it.

"Then as to the cold water," said Osmond, "I would hardly advise so rough a remedy. And he is going on so well. But you can send for ice; and, meantime, give me a good sized stocking."

He cut and fitted it adroitly to the patient's head: then drenched it with eau-de-Cologne, and soon the head began to steam.

By-and-by, David muttered a few incoherent words: and the anxious watchers thanked God aloud for them.

At length Mr. Osmond took leave with a cheerful countenance, and left them all grateful to him, and with a high opinion of his judgment and skill; especially Julia. She said Dr. Sampson was very amusing to talk to; but she should be sorry to trust to that rash, reckless, boisterous man, in time of danger.

Mr. Osmond, returning home, passed Munday and Co., the undertakers. The shop was shut long ago; but Munday junior was standing at the private door, and invited him in.

"Well, sir; buried old Mrs. Jephson to-day: and went off capital. Your little commission, sir, for recommending them our firm." With this he slipped four sovereigns into Mr. Osmond's hand. Osmond smiled benignly at their contact with his palm, and

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said in a grateful spirit: "There is an apoplexy at Albion Villa."

"Oh indeed, sir!" and Munday junior's eyes sparkled.

"But I have bled and cupped him."

"All right, sir: I'll be on the look out, and thank you."

About two in the morning a fly drove rapidly up to the villa, and Sampson got out.

He found David pale and muttering, and his wife and children hanging over him in deep distress.

He shook hands with them in silence, and eyed the patient keenly. He took the nightcap off, removed the pillows, lowered his head, and said quietly, "This is the cold fit come on: we must not shut our eyes on the pashint. Why, what is this? he has been cupped!" And Sampson changed colour, and his countenance fell.

Mrs. Dodd saw and began to tremble: "I could not hear from you; and Dr. Short and Mr. Osmond felt quite sure: and he seems better. Oh, Doctor Sampson, why were you not here? We have bled him as well. Oh, don't, dont, don't say it was wrong! He would have died; they said so. Oh, David! David! your wife has killed you." And she knelt and kissed his hand and implored his pardon, insensible.

Julia clung sobbing to her mother, in a vain attempt to comfort her.

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Sampson groaned:

"No no," said he: "don't go on so, my poor soul; you did all for the best; and now we must make the best of what is done. Hartshorn! brandy! and caution! For those two assassins have tied my hands."

While applying these timid remedies, he inquired if the cause was known. They told him they knew nothing; but that David had been wrecked on the coast of France, and had fallen down senseless in the street: a clerk of Mr. Hardie's had recognized him, and brought him home: so Alfred said.

"Then the cause is mintal," said Sampson; "unless he got a blow on the hid in bein' wrecked."

He then examined David's head carefully, and found a long scar:

"But this is not it," said he; "this is old."

Mrs. Dodd clasped her hands, and assured him it was new to her: her David had no scar there when he left her last.

Pursuing his examination, Sampson found an open wound in his left shoulder.

He showed it them; and they were all as pale as the patient in a moment. He then asked to see his coat, and soon discovered a corresponding puncture in it, which he examined long and narrowly.

"It is a stab—with a one-edged knife."

There was a simultaneous cry of horror.

"Don't alarm yourselves for that," said Sampson "it is nothing: a mere flesh-wound. It is the vein-wound that alarms me. This school knows nothing

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about the paroxysms and remissions of disease. They have bled and cupped him for *a passing fit*. It has passed into the cold stage, but no quicker than it would have done without stealing a drop of blood. To-morrow, by Disease's nature, he will have another hot fit in spite of their Bleeding. Then those ijjits would leech his temples; and on that paroxysm remitting by the nature of Disease, would fancy their leeches had cured it."

The words were the old words, but the tone and manner were so different: no shouting, no anger: all was spoken low and gently, and with a sort of sad and weary and worn-out air.

He ordered a kettle of hot water and a quantity of mustard, and made his preparations for the hot fit as he called it, maintaining the intermittent and febrile character of all disease.

The patient rambled a good deal, but quite incoherently, and knew nobody.

But about eight o'clock in the morning he was quite quiet, and apparently sleeping: so Mrs. Dodd stole out of the room to order some coffee for Sampson and Edward. They were nodding, worn out with watching.

Julia, whose high-strung nature could dispense with sleep on such an occasion, was on her knees praying for her father.

Suddenly there came from the bed, like a thunderclap, two words uttered loud and furiously:

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"HARDIE! VILLAIN!"

Up started the drowsy watchers, and rubbed their eyes. They had heard the sound but not the sense.

Julia rose from her knees bewildered and aghast: she had caught the strange words distinctly; words that were to haunt her night and day.

They were followed immediately by a loud groan: and the stertorous breathing recommenced, and the face was no longer pale, but flushed and turgid. On this Sampson hurried Julia from the room, and, with Edward's help, placed David on a stool in the bath, and getting on a chair, discharged half a bucket of cold water on his head: the patient gasped: another; and David shuddered, stared wildly, and put his hand to his head: a third, and he staggered to his feet.

At this moment Mrs. Dodd coming hastily into the room, he looked steadily at her, and said, "Lucy!"

She ran to throw her arms round him, but Sampson interfered: "Gently! gently!" said he; "we must have no violent emotions."

"Oh no! I will be prudent." And she stood quiet with her arms still extended, and cried for joy.

They got David to bed again, and Sampson told Mrs. Dodd there was no danger now from the malady, but only from the remedies.

And in fact David fell into a state of weakness and exhaustion; and kept muttering unintelligibly.

Dr. Short called in the morning, and was invited

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to consult with Dr. Sampson. He declined. "Dr. Sampson is a notorious quack: no physician of any eminence will meet him in consultation."

"I regret that resolution," said Mrs. Dodd, quietly, "as it will deprive me of the advantage of your skill."

Dr. Short bowed stiffly: "I shall be at your service, madam, when that empiric has given the patient up." And he drove away.

Osmond, finding Sampson installed, took the politic line; he contrived to glide by fine gradations into the empiric's opinions, without recanting his own, which were diametrically opposed.

Sampson, before he shot back to town, asked him to provide a good reliable nurse.

He sent a young woman of iron: she received Sampson's instructions, and assumed the command of the sick room; and was jealous of Mrs. Dodd and Julia; looked on them as mere rival nurses, amateurs, who, if not snubbed, might ruin the professionals: she seemed to have forgotten in the hospitals all about the family affections, and their power of turning invalids themselves into nurses.

The second night she got the patient all to herself for four hours; from eleven till two.

The ladies having consented to this arrangement, in order to recruit themselves for the work they were not so mad as to intrust wholly to a hireling, nurse's feathers smoothed themselves perceptibly.

At twelve the patient was muttering and murmur-

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ing incessantly about wrecks, and money, and things: of which vain babble nurse showed her professional contempt by nodding.

At 12·30 she slept.

At 1·20 she snored very loud, and woke instantly at the sound.

She took the thief out of the candle, and went like a good sentinel to look at her charge.

He was not there.

She rubbed her eyes, and held the candle over the place where he ought to be; where, in fact, he must be; for he was far too weak to move.

She tore the bedclothes down: she beat and patted the clothes with her left hand, and the candle began to shake violently in her right.

The bed was empty.

Mrs. Dodd was half asleep, when a hurried tap came to her door: she started up in a moment, and great dread fell on her; was David sinking?

"Ma'am! Ma'am! Is he here?"

"He! Who?" cried Mrs. Dodd, bewildered.

"Why *him!* he can't be far off."

In a moment Mrs. Dodd had opened the door; and her tongue and the nurse's seemed to clash together, so fast came the agitated words from each in turn; and crying "Call my son! Alarm the house!" Mrs. Dodd darted into the sick room. She was out again in a moment, and up in the attics rousing the maids, while the nurse thundered at Edward's door,

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and Julia's, and rang every bell she could get at. The inmates were soon alarmed, and flinging on their clothes: meantime Mrs. Dodd and the nurse scoured the house and searched every nook in it down to the very cellar; they found no David.

But they found something.

The street door ajar.

It was a dark drizzly night.

Edward took one road, Mrs. Dodd and Elizabeth another.

They were no sooner gone, than Julia drew the nurse into a room apart, and asked her eagerly if her father had said nothing.

"Said nothing, Miss? Why he was a talking all the night incessant."

"Did he say anything particular? think now."

"No, Miss: he went on as they all do just before a change. I never minds 'em; I hear so much of it."

"Oh nurse! nurse! have pity on me; try and recollect."

"Well, Miss, to oblige you then; it was mostly fights this time—and wrecks—and villains—and bankers—and sharks."

"Bankers??!" asked Julia, eagerly.

"Yes, Miss, and villains, they come once or twice, but most of the time it was sharks, and ships, and money, and—hotch-potch I call it the way they talk: bless your heart they know no better: everything

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they ever saw, or read, or heard tell of, it all comes out higgledy-piggledy just before they goes off: we that makes it a business never takes no notice of what they says, Miss: and never repeats it out of one sick house into another: that you *may* rely on."

Julia scarcely heard this: her hands were tight to her brow as if to aid her to think with all her force.

The result was, she told Sarah to put on her bonnet: and rushed up-stairs.

She was not gone three minutes; but in that short interval the nurse's tongue and Sarah's clashed together swiftly and incessantly.

Julia heard them. She came down with a long cloak on, whipped the hood over her head, beckoned Sarah quickly, and darted out. Sarah followed instinctively, but, ere they had gone many yards from the house, said, "Oh, Miss, nurse thinks you had much better not go."

"Nurse thinks! Nurse thinks! What does she know of me and my griefs?"

"Why, Miss, she is a very experienced woman, and she says——Oh dear! oh dear! And such a dark cold night for you to be out!"

"Nurse? Nurse? What did she say?"

"Oh, I haven't the heart to tell you: if you would but come back home with me! She says as much as that poor master's troubles will be over long before we can get to him." And with this Sarah burst out sobbing.

"Come quicker," cried Julia, despairingly. But

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after a while she said, "Tell me; only don't stop me."

"Miss, she says she nursed Mr. Campbell, the young curate that died last harvest-time but one, you know; and he lay just like master, and she expecting a change every hour: and oh, Miss, she met him coming down stairs in his nightgownd: and he said, 'Nurse, I am all right now,' says he, and died momently in her arms at the stair-foot. And she nursed an old farmer that lay as weak as master, and, just when they looked for him to go, lo and behold him dressed and out digging potatoes, and fell down dead before they could get hands on him mostly: and nurse have a friend, that have seen more than she have, which she is older than nurse, and says a body's life is all one as a rushlight, flares up strong momently, justly before it goes out altogether. Dear heart, where ever are we going to in the middle of the night?"

"Don't you see? to the quay."

"Oh, don't go there, Miss, whatever! I can't abide the sight of the water; when a body's in trouble." Here a drunken man confronted them, and asked them if they wanted a beau: and, on their slipping past him in silence, followed them, and offered repeatedly to treat them. Julia moaned, and hurried faster. "Oh, Miss," said Sarah, "what could you expect, coming out at this time of night? I'm sure the breath is all out of me; you do tear along so."

"Tear? we are crawling. Ah, Sarah, you are not

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his daughter. There, follow me! I cannot go so slow." And she set off to run.

Presently she passed a group of women standing talking at a corner of the street; and windows were open with nightcapped heads framed in them.

She stopped a moment to catch the words; they were talking about a ghost which was said to have just passed down the street; and discussing whether it was a real ghost, or a trick to frighten people.

Julia uttered a low cry, and redoubled her speed, and was soon at Mr. Richard Hardie's door: but the street was deserted, and she was bewildered, and began to think she had been too hasty in her conjecture. A chill came over her impetuosity. The dark, drizzly, silent night, the tall masts, the smell of the river, how strange it all seemed: and she to be there alone at such an hour.

Presently she heard voices somewhere near. She crossed over to a passage that seemed to lead towards them; and then she heard the voices plainly, and among them one that did not mingle with the others, for it was the voice she loved. She started back and stood irresolute. Would he be displeased with her?

Feet came trampling slowly along the passage.

His voice came with them.

She drew back and looked round for Sarah.

While she stood fluttering, the footsteps came close, and there emerged from the passage into the full light of the gas-lamp Alfred and two policemen

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carrying a silent, senseless, figure, in a night-gown, with a great coat thrown over part of him.

It was her father; mute and ghastly.

The policemen still tell of that strange meeting under the gas-light by Hardie's Bank; and how the young lady flung her arms round her father's head, and took him for dead, and kissed his pale cheeks, and moaned over him; and how the young gentleman raised her against her will, and sobbed over her; and how they, though policemen, cried like children. And to them I must refer the reader: I have not the skill to convey the situation.

They got more policemen to help, and carried him to Albion Villa.

On the way something cold and mysterious seemed to have come between Julia and Alfred. They walked apart in gloomy silence broken only by foreboding sighs.

I pass over the tempest of emotions under which that sad burden entered Albion Villa; and hurry to the next marked event.

Next day the patient had lost his extreme pallor, and wore a certain uniform sallow hue; and at noon, just before Sampson's return, he opened his eyes wide, and fixed them on Mrs. Dodd and Julia, who were now his nurses. They hailed this with delight, and held their breath to hear him speak to them the first sweet words of reviving life and love.

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But soon to their surprise and grief they found he did not know them. They spoke to him, each in turn, and told him piteously who they were, and implored him with tears to know them, and speak to them. But no, he fixed a stony gaze on them, that made them shudder; and their beloved voices passed over him like an idle wind.

Sampson, when he came, found the ladies weeping by the bedside.

They greeted him with affection, Julia especially: the boisterous controversialist had come out a gentle, zealous, artist, in presence of a real danger.

Dr. Sampson knew nothing of what had happened in his absence. He stepped to the bedside cheerfully; and the ladies' eyes were bent keenly on his face in silence.

He had no sooner cast eyes on David than his countenance fell, and his hard but expressive features filled with concern.

That was enough for Mrs. Dodd: "And he does not know me," she cried: "he does not know my voice. *His* voice would call me back from the grave itself. He is dying. He will never speak to me again. Oh, my poor orphan girl!"

"No! no!" said Sampson, "you are quite mistaken: he will not die. But——."

His tongue said no more. His grave and sombre face spoke volumes.

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CHAPTER VIII.

To return to the Bank: Skinner came back from the Dodds' that miserable afternoon, in a state of genuine agitation, and regret. He was human and therefore mixed; and their desolation had shocked him.

The footman told him Mr. Hardie was not at home: gone to London, he believed. Skinner walked away dejected. What did this mean? Had he left the country?

He smiled at his fears, and felt positive Mr. Hardie had misled the servants, and was quietly waiting for him in the Bank parlour.

It was now dusk: he went round to that little dark nook of the garden the parlour window opened on, and tapped: there was no reply; the room looked empty. He tried the sash: it yielded: Mr. Hardie had been too occupied with embezzling another's property to take common precautions in defence of his own; never in his life before had he neglected to fasten the iron shutters with his own hand, and to-day he had left the very window unfastened. This augured ill. "He is off: he has done me along with

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the rest," thought Skinner. He stepped into the room, found a lucifer-box, shut the shutters, lighted a candle, and went peering about amongst the banker's papers, to see if he could find a clue to his intentions: and, as he pottered and peered, he quaked as well: a detector by dishonest means feels thief-like; and is what he feels. He made some little discoveries, that guided him in his own conduct; he felt more and more sure his employer would outwit him if he could; and resolved it should be diamond cut diamond.

The church clock struck one.

He started at the hour, crept out, and closed the window softly: then away by the garden gate.

A light was still burning in Alfred's room: and at this Skinner had another touch of compunction; "There is one won't sleep this night along of our work," thought he.

At three next afternoon Mr. Hardie reappeared.

He had gone up to town to change the form of the deposit:—He took care to think of it as a deposit still, the act of deposit having been complete, the withdrawal incomplete, and by no fault of his, for he had offered it back; but Fate and Accident had interposed—He had converted the notes into gold direct, and the bills into gold through notes; this was like going into the river to hide his trail. Next process: he turned his gold into 500*l.* notes; and came flying home with them.

His return was greeted by Skinner with a sigh of

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relief. Hardie heard it, interpreted it aright, and sent for him into the parlour: and there told him with a great affectation of frankness what he had done: then asked significantly if there was any news at Albion Villa.

Skinner in reply told Mr. Hardie of the distress he had witnessed up at Albion Villa: "And, sir," said he, lowering his voice, "Mr. Alfred helped carry the body up-stairs.—It is a nice mess altogether, sir, when you come to think."

"Ah! all the better," was the cool reply; "he will be useful to let us know what we want; he will tell Jane, and Jane me. You don't think he will live, do you?"

"Live! no: and then who will know the money is here?"

"Who should know? Did not he say he had just landed, and been shipwrecked? Shipwrecked men do not bring fourteen thousand pounds ashore." The speaker's eyes sparkled; Skinner watched him demurely. "Skinner," said he, solemnly, "I believe my daughter Jane is right; and that Providence really interferes sometimes in the affairs of this world: you know how I have struggled, to save my family from disgrace and poverty: those struggles have failed in a great degree: but Heaven has seen them, and saved this money from the sea, and dropped it into my very hands to retrieve my fortunes with. I must be grateful: spend a portion of it in charity; and rear a noble fortune on the rest. Confound it all!"

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And his crestfallen countenance showed some ugly misgiving had flashed on him quite suddenly.

"What, sir? what?" asked Skinner, eagerly.

"The Receipt?!"

CHAPTER IX.

"THE receipt? Oh, is that all? *you* have got that," said Skinner, very coolly.

"What makes you think so?" inquired the other, keenly. He instantly suspected Skinner of having it.

"Why, sir, I saw it in his hand."

"Then it has got to Albion Villa; and we are ruined."

"No, no, sir; you won't hear me: I am sure I saw it fall out of his hand when he was taken ill: and, I think, but I won't be sure, he fell on it. Any way, there was nothing in his hands when I delivered him at Albion Villa; so it must be here: I dare say you have thrown it into a drawer or somewhere, promiscuously."

"No, no, Skinner," said Mr. Hardie, with increasing alarm: "it is useless for us to deceive ourselves: I was not three minutes in the room, and thought of nothing but getting to town and cashing the bills."

He rang the bell sharply, and on Betty coming in,

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asked her what she had done with that paper that was on the floor?

"Took it up and put it on the table, sir. This was it, I think." And she laid her finger upon a paper.

"No, no!" said Mr. Hardie: "the one I mean was much smaller than that.

"What," said she, with that astonishing memory for trifles people have who never read, "was it a little crumpled up paper? lying by the basket?"

"Yes! yes! that sounds like it."

"Oh, I put that *into* the basket."

Mr. Hardie's eye fell directly on the basket, but it was empty. She caught his glance, and told him she had emptied it in the dust-hole as usual. Mr. Hardie uttered an angry exclamation. Betty, an old servant of his wife's, resented it with due dignity by tossing her head as she retired.

"There is no help for it," said Mr. Hardie, bitterly; "we must go and grub in the dust-hole now."

"Why, sir, your name is not on it, after all."

"What does that matter? A man is bound by the act of his agent: besides, it is my form, and my initials on the back. Come, let us put a good face on the thing." And he led the way to the kitchen; and got up a little laugh, and asked the scullery maid if she could show Mr. Skinner and him the dust-hole. She stared, but obeyed, and the pair followed her, making merry.

The dust-hole was empty.

The girl explained: "It is the dustman's day: he

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came at eleven o'clock in the morning and carr'd all the dust away: and grumbled at the paper and the bones, he did. So I told him beggars musn't be choosers: just like his impudence! when he gets it for nothing, and sells it for a mint outside the town." The unwonted visitors left her in dead silence almost before she had finished her sentence.

Mr. Hardie sat down in his parlour thoroughly discomposed; Skinner watched him furtively.

At last the former broke out: "This is the devil's doing; the devil in person. No intelligence nor ability can resist such luck. I almost wish we had never meddled with it: we shall never feel safe, never be safe."

Skinner made light of the matter, treated the receipt as thrown into the sea. "Why, sir," said he, "by this time it will have found its way to that monstrous heap of ashes on the London road; and who will ever look for it there? or notice it if they find it?" Hardie shook his head: "That monstrous heap is all sold every year to the farmers. That Receipt, worth 14,000*l.* to me, will be strewed on the soil for manure: then some farmer's man, or farmer's boy that goes to the Sunday-school, will read it, see Captain Dodd's name, and bring it to Albion Villa, in hopes of a sixpence: a sixpence. Heaven help the man who does a doubtful act, and leaves damnatory evidence, on paper, kicking about the world."

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From that hour the cash Hardie carried in his bosom, without a right to it, began to blister.

He thought of telling the dustman he had lost a paper, and setting him to examine the mountain of ashes on the London road: but here caution stepped in: how could he describe the paper without awakening curiosity and defeating his own end? He gave that up. It was better to let the sleeping dog lie.

Finally, he resolved to buy security in a world where after all one has to buy everything; so he employed an adroit agent, and quietly purchased that mountain, the refuse of all Barkington. But he felt so ill used, he paid for it in his own notes; by this means the treaty reverted to the primitive form of barter:* ashes for rags.

This transaction he concealed from his confederate.

When he had completed it, he was not yet secure; for another day had passed, and Captain Dodd alive still. Men often recover from apoplexy, especially when they survive the first twenty-four hours. Should he live, he would not now come into any friendly arrangement with the man who had so nearly caused his death. So then good-bye to the matrimonial combination Hardie had at first relied on to patch his debt to Alfred, and his broken fortunes. Then as to keeping the money and defying Dodd, that would be very difficult and dangerous; mercantile bills are traceable things: and criminal prosecu-

* Or exchange of commodities without the aid of money: see Homer, and Welsh Villages, passim.

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tions awkward ones. He found himself in a situation he could not see his way through by any mental effort; there were so many objections to every course, and so many to its opposite. "He walked among fires," as the Latins say. But the more he pondered on the course to be taken should Dodd live, the plainer did this dilemma stare him in the face; either he must refund, or fly the country with another man's money, and leave behind him the name of a thief. Parental love, and the remains of self-respect, writhed at this thought; and with these combined a sentiment less genuine, but by no means feeble; the love of reputation. So it was with a reluctant and sick heart he went to the shipping office, and peered at the posters, to see when the next ship sailed for the United States. Still he did go.

Intent on his own schemes, and expecting every day to be struck in front, he did not observe that a man in a rusty velveteen coat followed him, and observed this act; and indeed all his visible acts.

Another perplexity was, when he should break. There were objections to doing it immediately; and objections to putting it off.

With all this the man was in a ferment: by day he sat waiting and fearing, by night he lay sleepless and thinking; and, though his stoical countenance retained its composure, the furrows deepened in it, and the iron nerves began to twitch at times, from strain of mind and want of sleep, and that rack, suspense. Not a night that he did not awaken a dozen

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times from his brief dozes with a start, and a dread of exposure by some mysterious, unforeseen, means.

It is remarkable how truths sometimes flash on men at night in hours of nervous excitement: it was in one of these nightly reveries David Dodd's pocket-book flashed back upon Mr. Hardie. He saw it before his eyes quite plain, and on the inside of the leather cover a slip of paper pasted, and written on in pencil or pale ink, he could not recal which.

What was that writing? It might be the numbers of the notes, the description of the bills. Why had he not taken it out of the dying man's pocket? "Fool! fool!" he groaned; "to do anything by halves."

Another night he got a far severer shock. Lying in his bed dozing, and muttering, as usual, he was suddenly startled out of that uneasy slumber by three tremendous knocks at the street door.

He sprang out of bed, and in his confusion made sure the officers of justice were come for him: he began to huddle on his clothes with a vague notion of flight.

He had got on his trousers and slippers, and was looking under his pillow for the fatal cash, when he heard himself called loudly and repeatedly by name; but this time the sound came from the garden into which his bedroom looked. He opened it very softly, in trepidation and wonder, which were speedily doubled by what met his eyes; for there, right in

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front of his window, stood an unearthly figure; corresponding in every particular to that notion of a ghost in which we are reared, and which, when our nerves are healthy, we can ridicule as it deserves; but somehow it is never cleaned out of our imagination so thoroughly as it is out of our judgment.

The figure was white as a sheet, and seemed supernaturally tall; and it cried out in a voice like a wounded lion's, "You villain! you Hardie! give me back my money: my fourteen thousand pounds. Give me my children's money, or may your children die before your eyes: give me my darlings' money; or may the eternal curse of God light on you and yours, you scoundrel!"

And the figure kneeled on the grass, and repeated the terrible imprecation almost in the same words; that Hardie shrank back, and, resolute as he was, cowered with superstitious awe.

But this sentiment soon gave way to vulgar fears; the man would alarm the town. And in fact Mr. Hardie, in the midst of his agitation, was dimly conscious of hearing a window open softly, not very far from him. But it was a dark night. He put his head out in great agitation, and whispered, "Hush! hush! And I'll bring it you down directly."

Internally cursing his hard fate, he got the fatal cash, put on his coat: hunted for the key of the Bank parlour, and, having found it, went softly down the stairs, unlocked the door, and went to open the shutters.

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At this moment his ear caught a murmur; a low buzzing of voices in the garden.

He naturally thought that Captain Dodd was exposing him to some of the townspeople; he was puzzled what to do; and like a cautious man as he was, remained passive, but on the watch.

Presently the voices were quiet, and he heard footsteps come very slowly towards the window at which he stood, and then make for the little gate. On this he slipped into the kitchen, which faced the street, and got to a window there, and listened. His only idea was to catch their intentions, if possible, and meet them accordingly. He dared not open the window; for above him on the pavement he saw a female figure half standing, half crouching: but soon that figure rushed wildly out of his sight to meet the footsteps, and then he ventured to open the window, and, listening, heard cries of despair, and a young heartbroken voice say her father was dead.

"Ah!—that is all right," muttered Hardie.

Still even this profound egotist was not yet so hardened, but that he felt one chill of horror at himself for the thought; a passing chill.

He listened and listened; and by-and-by he heard the slow feet recommence their journey, amidst sobs and sighs; and those sorrowful feet, and the sobs and sighs of his causing, got fainter and fainter, retreated, and left him in quiet possession of the fourteen thousand pounds he had brought down to give it up: two minutes ago it was not worth as many pence to him.

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He drew a long breath of relief. "It is mine; I am to keep it. It is the will of Heaven."

Poor Heaven!

He went to his bed again, and by a resolute effort composed himself, and determined to sleep. And in fact he was just dropping off, when suddenly he started wide awake again: for it recurred to him vividly that a window in his house had opened, while David was cursing him and demanding his children's money.

Whose window?

Half a dozen people and more slept on that side of the house.

Whose window could it be?

He walked among fires.

CHAPTER X.

A LITTLE crowd of persons stood in front of the old Bank, looking half stupified at the shutters, and at a piece of paper pasted on them announcing a suspension, only for a month or so, and laying the blame on certain correspondents not specified.

So great was the confidence inspired by the old Bank, that many said it would come round, it must come round, in a month: but other of Mr. Hardie's unfortunate clients recognised in the above a mere formula to let them down by degrees: they had seen

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many statements as hopeful end in a dividend of sixpence in the pound.

Before the day closed, the scene at the Bank door was heartrending: respectable persons, reduced to pauperism in that one day, kept arriving and telling their fellow-sufferers their little all was with Hardie, and nothing before them but the workhouse or the almshouse: ruined mothers came and held up their ruined children for the Banker to see; and the doors were hammered at, and the house as well as the Bank was beleaguered by a weeping, wailing, despairing crowd.

But, like an idle wave beating on a rock, all this human misery dashed itself in vain against the Banker's brick walls and shutters, hard to them as his very heart.

The next day they mobbed Alfred and hissed him at the back door. Jane was too ashamed and too frightened to stir out. Mr. Hardie sat calmly putting the finishing strokes to his fabricated balance-sheet.

Some innocent and excited victims went to the mayor for redress; to the aldermen, the magistrates in vain.

Towards afternoon the Banker's cool contempt for his benefactors, whose lives he had darkened, received a temporary check; a heavy stone was flung at the Bank shutters: this ferocious blow made him start, and the place rattle: it was the signal for a shower; and presently tink, tink, went the windows

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of the house, and in came the stones starring the mirrors, upsetting the chairs, denting the papered walls, chipping the mantelpieces, shivering the bell-glasses and statuettes, and strewing the room with dirty pebbles, and painted fragments, and glittering ruin.

Hardie winced: this was the sort of appeal to touch him. But soon he recovered his sang froid: "Thank you," said he, "I'm much obliged to you; now I'm in the right and you are in the wrong." And he put himself under protection of the police; and fee'd them so royally that they were zealous on his behalf, and rough and dictatorial even with those who thronged the place only to moan and lament and hold up their ruined children: "You *must* move on, you Misery," said the Police. And they were right; Misery gains nothing by stopping the way; nothing by bemoaning itself.

But if the Banker, naturally egotistical, and now entirely wrapped in his own plans, and fears, and well-earned torments, was deaf to the anguish of his clients, there were others in his house who felt it keenly and deeply. Alfred and Jane were heart-broken: they sat hand in hand in a little room, drawn closer by misfortune; and heard the groans at their door; and the tears of pity ran down their own cheeks hot with shame; and Alfred wrote on the fly-leaf of his "Ethics" a vow to pay every shilling his father owed these poor people—before he

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died. It was like him, and like his happy age; at which the just and the generous can command, in imagination, the means to do kindred deeds.

Soon he found, to his horror, that he had seen but a small per-centage of the distress his father had caused; the greater griefs, as usual, stayed at home: behind the gadding woes lay a terrible number of silent, decent, ruined homes, and broken hearts, and mixed sorrows so unmerited, so complicated, so piteous, and so cruel, that he was ready to tear his hair to know them and not be able to relieve them instantly.

Of that mere sample I give a mere sample: divine the bulk then; and revolve a page of human history often turned by the people, but too little studied by statisticians and legislators.

Mr. Esgar, a respectable merchant, had heavy engagements, to meet which his money lay at the old Bank. Living at a distance he did not hear the news till near dinner-time: and he had promised to take his daughters to a ball that night. He did so; left them there; went home, packed up their clothes and valuables, and next day levanted with them to America, taking all the money he could scrape together in London: and so he passed his ruin on to others. Esgar was one of those who wear their honesty long; but loose: it was his first disloyal act in business: "Dishonesty made me dishonest," was his excuse. Valeat quantum.

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John Shaw, a steady footman, had saved and saved, from twenty-one years old to thirty-eight, for "Footman's Paradise," a public-house. He was now engaged to a comely barmaid, who sympathized with him therein, and he had just concluded a bargain for the "Rose and Crown" in the suburbs. Unluckily —for him—the money had not been paid over. The blow fell: he lost his all; not his money only, but his wasted life. He could not be 21 again; so he hanged himself within forty-eight hours, and was buried by the parish, grumbling a little, pitying none.

James and Peter Gilpin, William Scott, and Joel Paton, were poor fishermen, and Anglo-Saxon heroes; that's heroes with an eye to the main chance; they risked their lives at sea to save a ship and get salvage; failing there, they risked their lives all the same, like fine fellows as they were, to save the crew. They succeeded, but ruined their old boat. A subscription was raised, and prospered so, that a boat-builder built them a new one on tick, price eighty-five pounds; and the publicans said, "Drink, boys, drink; the subscription will cover all: it is up to 120 already." The subscription money was swallowed with the rest, and the Anglo-Saxon heroes hauled to prison.

Doctor Phillips, aged 74, warned by growing infirmities, had sold a tidy practice, with house, furniture, and good will, for a fair price; and put it in the bank, awaiting some investment. The money was

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gone now, and the poor old doctor, with a wife and daughter and a crutch, was at once a pauper and an exile: for he had sold under the usual condition, not to practise within so many miles of his successor. He went to that successor, and begged permission to be his assistant at a small, small, salary. "I want a younger man," was the reply. Then he went round to his old patients, and begged a few half guineas to get him a horse and chaise and keep him over the first month in his new place. They pitied him, but most of them were sufferers too by Hardie, and all they gave him did but buy a donkey and cart; and with that he and his went slowly and sadly to a village ten miles distant from the place, where all his life had been spent in comfort and good credit. The poor old gentleman often looked back from his cart at the church spires of Barkington.

> From seventeen till now almost four score,
> There lived he, but now lived there no more.
> At seventeen many their fortunes seek;
> But at four score it is too old a week.

Arrived at his village, he had to sell his donkey and trust to his crutch. And so Infirmity crept about begging leave to cure Disease—with what success may be inferred from this: Miss Phillips, a lady-like girl of eighteen, was taken up by Farmer Giles before Squire Langton, for stealing turnips out of a field: the farmer was hard, and his losses in Hardie's bank had made him bitter hard, so the poor girl's excuse, that she could not let her father

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starve, had no effect on him: to jail she should go.*

Took to the national vice, and went to the national dogs, Thomas Fisher, a saving tinman, and a bachelor: so I expect no pity for him.

To the same jail, by the same road, dragging their families, went the Rev. Henry Scudamore, a curate; Philip Hall, a linendraper; Neil Pratt, a shoemaker; Simon Harris, a greengrocer; and a few more; but the above were all prudent, laborious men, who took a friendly glass, but seldom exceeded, until Hardie's bankruptcy drove them to the devil of drink for comfort.

Turned professional thief, Joseph Locke, working locksmith, who had just saved money enough to buy a shop and good will; and now lost it every penny.

Turned Atheist, and burnt the family Bible before his weeping wife and terrified children and gaping servant girl, Mr. Williams, a Sunday-school teacher, known hitherto only as a mild, respectable man, a teetotaller, and a good parent and husband. He did not take to drinking; but he did to cursing; and forbade his own flesh and blood ever to enter a church again. This man became an outcast, shunned by all.

* I find, however, that Squire Langton resolutely refused to commit Miss Phillips. The real reason, I suspect, was, that he had a respect for the Gospel, and not much for the law, except those invaluable clauses which restrain poaching. The reason he *gave* was: "Turnips be hanged! If she hadn't eaten them, the fly would.' However, he found means to muzzle Giles, and sent the old doctor two couple of rabbits.

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Three elderly sisters, the Misses Lunley, well born and bred, lived together on their funds which, small singly, united made a decent competence. Two of them had refused marriage in early life for fear the third should fall into less tender hands than theirs. For Miss Blanche Lunley was a cripple: disorder of the spine had robbed her, in youth's very bloom, of the power not only to dance, as you girls do, but to walk or even stand upright; leaving her two active little hands, and a heart as nearly angelic as we are likely to see here on earth.

She lay all day long on a little iron bedstead, at the window of their back parlour that looked on a sunny little lawn; working eagerly for the poor; teaching the poor, young and old, to read, chiefly those of her own sex; hearing the sorrows of the poor, composing the quarrels of the poor, relieving their genuine necessities with a little money, and much ingenuity, and labour.

Some poor woman, in a moment of inspiration, called Miss Blanche "the sunshine of the poor." The word was instantly caught up in the parish, and had now this many years gently displaced "Lunley," and settled on her here below, and its echo gone before her up to Heaven.

The poor "sunshine of the poor" was happy: Life was sweet to her. To know whether this is so, it is useless to inquire of the backbone; or the limbs: look at the face! She lay at her window in the kindred sunshine, and in a world of sturdy, able,

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agile cursers, grumblers, and yawners, her face, pale as ashes, wore the eternal sunshine of a happy, holy, smile.

But there came one to her bedside and told her the Bank was broken, and all the money gone she and her sisters had lent Mr. Hardie.

The saint clasped her hands and said, "Oh my poor people! What will become of them?" And the tears ran down her pale and now sorrowful cheeks.

At this time she did not know the full extent of their losses.

But they had given Mr. Hardie a power of attorney to draw out all their consols. That remorseless man had abused the discretion this gave him, and beggared them—they were his personal friends too—to swell his secret hoard.

When "the sunshine of the poor" heard this, and knew that she was now the poorest of the poor, she clasped her hands and cried, "Oh my poor sisters! my poor sisters!" and she could work no more for sighing.

The next morning found the sunshine of the poor extinct, in her little bed: ay, dead of grief with no grain of egotism in it; gone straight to Heaven without one angry word against Richard Hardie or any other.

Old Betty had a horror of the workhouse. To save her old age from it she had deposited her wages in the Bank for the last twenty years; and also a little

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legacy from Mr. Hardie's father. She now went about the house of her master and debtor, declaring she was sure he would not rob *her*, and, if he did, she would never go into the poor-house. "I'll go out on the common, and die there. Nobody will miss *me*."

The next instance led to consequences upon consequences: and that is my excuse for telling it the reader somewhat more fully than Alfred heard it.

Mrs. Maxley, one night, found something rough at her feet in bed. "What on earth is this?" said she.

"Never you mind," said Maxley: "say it's my breeches; what then?"

"Why what on earth does the man put his breeches to bed for?"

"That is my business," roared Maxley, and whispered drily, "'tain't for you to wear 'em, howsever."

This little spar led to his telling her he had drawn out all their money: but, when she asked the reason, he snubbed her again, indirectly; recommended her sleep.

The fact is, the small-clothes were full of bank notes; and Maxley always followed them into bed now, for fear of robbers.

The Bank broke on a Tuesday: Maxley dug on impassive; and when curious people came about him to ask whether he was a loser, he used to inquire very gravely, and dwelling on every syllable, "Do—you—see—anything—green—in this here eye?"

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Friday was club day; the clubsmen met at the "Greyhound" and talked over their losses. Maxley sat smoking complacently; and, when his turn came to groan, he said drily: "I draad all mine a week afore. (Exclamations.) I had a hinkling: my boy Jack he wrote to me from Canada as how Hardies was rotten out there: now these here Bankers they be like an oak tree: they do go at the limbs first, and then at the heart."

The club was wroth; "What? you went and made yourself safe and never gave any of us a chance! Was that neighbourly? was that——clubbable?"

To a hailstorm of similar reproaches, Maxley made but one reply: "'Twarn't *my* business to take care o' *you*." He added, however, a little sulkily: "I was laad for slander once: scalded dog fears lue-warm water."

"Oh," said one, "I don't believe him. He puts a good face on it; but his nine hundred is gone along with ourn."

"'Tain't gone far, then." With this he put his hand in his pocket, and after some delay pulled out a nice new crisp note and held it up: "What is that? I ask the company."

"Looks like a ten pun note, James."

"Well, the bulk 'grees with the sample; I knows where to find eight score and nine to match this here."

The note was handed round: and on inspection each countenance in turn wore a malicious smile;

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till at last Maxley, surrounded by grinning faces, felt uneasy.

"What be 'e all grinning at like a litter o' Chessy cats? warn't ye ugly enough without showing of your rotten teeth?"

"Haw! haw!"

"Better say 'tain't money at all, but only a wench's curl paper:" and he got up and snatched it fiercely out of the last inspector's hand. "Ye can't run your rigs on me," said he "What an if I can't read words, I can figures; and I spelt the ten out on every one of them, afore I'd take it."

A loud and general laugh greeted this boast.

Then Maxley snatched up his hat in great wrath, and some anxiety, and went out, followed by a peal.

In five minutes he was at home; and tossed the note into his wife's lap. She was knitting by a farthing dip. "Dame!" said he, controlling all appearance of anxiety, "what d'ye call that?"

She took up the note and held it close to the candle: "Why Jem, it is a ten pound note, one of Hardie's—*as was.*"

"Then what were those fools laughing at?" And he told her all that had happened.

Mrs. Maxley dropped her knitting and stood up trembling: "Why you told me you had got our money all safe out?"

"Well, and so I have, ye foolish woman;" and he drew the whole packet out of his pocket and flung

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them fiercely on the table. Mrs. Maxley ran her finger and eye over them, and uttered a scream of anger and despair.

"These! these be all Hardie's notes," she cried; "and what vally be Hardie's notes when Hardie's be broke?"

Maxley staggered as if he had been shot.

The woman's eyes flashed fury at him: "This is your work, ye born idiot: 'mind your own business,' says you: you *must* despise your wedded wife, that has more brains in her finger than you have in all your great long useless carcase: you *must* have your secrets: one day poison, another day beggary: you have ruined me, you have murdered me: get out of my sight! for if I find a knife I'll put it in you, I will." And in her ungovernable passion, she actually ran to the dresser for a knife: at which Maxley caught up a chair and lifted it furiously above his head to fling at her.

Luckily the man had more self-command than the woman; he dashed the chair furiously on the floor, and ran out of the house.

He wandered about half stupid: and presently his feet took him mechanically round to his garden. He pottered about among his plants, looking at them, inspecting them closely, and scarce seeing them. However, he covered up one or two, and muttered, "I think there will be a frost to-night: I think there will be a frost." Then his legs seemed to give way. He sat down and thought of his wedding day: he

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began to talk to himself out loud, as some people do in trouble: "Bless her comely face," said he, "and to think I had my arm lifted to strike her, after wearing her so long, and finding her good stuff upon the whole. Well, thank my stars I didn't. We must make the best on't: money's gone; but here's the garden and our hands still: and 'tain't as if we were single to gnaw our hearts alone: wedded life cuts grief a two. Let's make it up: and begin again. Sixty, come Martinmas: and Susan forty-eight: and I be a'most weary of turning moulds."

He went round to his front door.

There was a crowd round it; a buzzing crowd, with all their faces turned towards his door.

He came at their backs, and asked peevishly what was to do now. Some of the women shrieked at his voice. The crowd turned about; and a score of faces peered at him: some filled with curiosity, some with pity.

"Lord help us!" said the poor man, "is there any more trouble a foot to-day? Stand aside, please; and let me know."

"No! no!" cried a woman, "don't let him."

"Not let me go into my own house, young woman?" said Maxley, with dignity: "be these your manners?"

"Oh, James: I meant you no ill. Poor man!"

"Poor soul!" said another.

"Stand aloof!" said a strange man. "Who has as good a right to be there as he have?"

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A lane was made directly, and Maxley rushed down between two rows of peering faces, with his knees knocking together, and burst into his own house. A scream from the women inside, as he entered, and a deep groan from the strong man bereaved of his mate, told the tragedy. Poor Susan Maxley was gone.

She had died of Breast-pang, within a minute of his leaving her; and the last words of two faithful spouses were words of anger.

All these things, and many more less tragic, but very deplorable, came to Alfred Hardie's knowledge, and galled and afflicted him deeply. And several of these revelations heaped discredit high upon Richard Hardie, till the young man, born with a keen sense of justice, and bred amongst honourable minds, began to shudder at his own father.

Herein he was alone: Jane, with the affectionate blindness of her sex, could throw her arms round her father's neck, and pity him for his losses—by his own dishonesty—and pity him most when some victim of his unprincipled conduct died, or despaired. "Poor papa will feel this so deeply," was her only comment on such occasions.

Alfred was not sorry she could take this view; and left her unmolested to confound black with white, and wrong with right, at affection's dictates: but his own trained understanding was not to be duped in matters of plain morality. And so, unable

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to cure the wrongs he deplored, unable to put his conscience into his pocket, like Richard Hardie, or into his heart like Jane, he wandered alone, or sat brooding and dejected: and the attentive reader, if I am so fortunate as to possess one, will not be surprised to learn that he was troubled too with dark mysterious surmises he half dreaded, yet felt it his duty, to fathom. These and Mrs. Dodd's loss by the Bank combined to keep him out of Albion Villa. He often called to ask after Captain Dodd, but was ashamed to enter the house.

Now Richard Hardie's anxiety to know whether David was to die or live had not declined, but rather increased. If the latter, he was now resolved to fly to the United States with his booty, and cheat his alienated son along with the rest: he had come by degrees down to this. It was on Alfred he had counted to keep him informed of David's state: but, on his putting a smooth inquiry, the young man's face flushed with shame, or anger, or something, and he gave a very short, sharp, and obscure reply. In reality he did not know much, nor did Sarah, his informant: for of late the servants had never been allowed to enter David's room.

Mr. Hardie, after this rebuff, never asked Alfred again; but having heard Sampson's name mentioned as Dodd's medical attendant, wrote and asked him to come and dine, next time he should visit Barkington: "You will find me a fallen man," said he; "to-morrow we resign our house and premises and

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furniture to the assignees, and go to live at a little furnished cottage not very far from your friends the Dodds. It is called 'Musgrove Cottage.' There, where we have so little to offer besides a welcome, none but true friends will come near us; indeed, there are very few I should venture to ask for such a proof of fidelity to your broken friend.

"R. H."

The good-hearted Sampson sent a cordial reply, and came to dinner at Musgrove Cottage.

Now all Hardie wanted of him in reality was to know about David; so when Jane had retired, and the decanter circulated, he began to pump him by his vanity. "I understand," said he, "you have wrought one of your surprising cures in this neighbourhood. Albion Villa!"

Sampson shook his head sorrowfully: Mr. Hardie's eyes sparkled: Alfred watched him keenly and bitterly.

"How can I work a great cure after those ass-assins Short and Osmond? Look, see! the man had been wounded in the hid, and lost blood: thin stabbed in the shoulder; and lost more blood." —Both the Hardies uttered an ejaculation of unfeigned surprise—"So, instid of recruiting the buddy thus exhausted of the great liquid material of all repair, the profissional ass-ass-in came and exhausted him worse; stabbed him while he slept; stabbed him unconscious, stabbed him in a vein: and stole more blood from him. Wasn't that enough? No!

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the routine of 'professional ass-ass-ination had but begun; next they stabbed him with cupping needles, and so stole more of his life-blood. And they were goen from their stabs to their bites, goen to leech his temples, and so hand him over to the sixton."

"But you came in and saved him," cried Alfred.

"I saved his life," said Sampson, sorrowfully: "but life is not th' only good thing a man may be robbed of by those who steal his life-blood, and so impoverish and water the contints of the vessels of the brain."

"Doctor Sampson," said Alfred, "what do you mean by these mysterious words? you alarm me."

"What, don't you know? Haven't they told you?"

"No, I have not had the courage to enter the house since the Bank——" he stopped in confusion.

"Ay, I understand," said Sampson: "however, it can't be hidden now—

"HE IS A MANIAC."

Sampson made this awful announcement soberly and sorrowfully.

Alfred groaned aloud, and even his father experienced a momentary remorse; but so steady had been the progress of corruption, that he felt almost unmixed joy the next instant: and his keenwitted son surprised the latter sentiment in his face, and shuddered with disgust.

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Sampson went on to say that he believed the poor man had gone flourishing a razor; and Mrs. Dodd had said "Yes, kill me, David: kill the mother of your children," and never moved: which feminine, or in other words irrational, behaviour, had somehow disarmed him. But it would not happen again: his sister had come; a sensible, resolute woman. She had signed the order, and Osmond and he the certificates, and he was gone to a private asylum. "Talking of that," said Sampson, rising suddenly, "I must go and give them a word of comfort; for they are just breaking their hearts at parting with him, poor things: I'll be back in an hour."

On his departure, Jane returned and made the tea in the dining-room: they lived like that now.

Mr. Hardie took it from his favourite's little white hand, and smiled on her: he should not have to go to a foreign land after all: who would believe a madman if he should rave about his thousands? He sipped his tea luxuriously, and presently delivered himself thus, with bland self-satisfaction:

"My dear Alfred, some time ago you wished to marry a young lady without fortune; you thought that I had a large one: and you expected me to supply all deficiencies. You did not overrate my parental feeling; but you did my means: I would have done this for you, and with pleasure, but for my own coming misfortunes. As it was, I said 'No.' And, when you demanded, somewhat peremptorily, my reasons, I said, 'Trust me.' Well, you see I was

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right: such a marriage would have been your utter ruin. However, I conclude after what Dr. Sampson has told us, you have resigned it on other grounds. Jane, my dear, Captain Dodd, I am sorry to say, is afflicted. He has gone mad."

"Gone mad?! oh, how shocking! What will become of his poor children?" She thought of Edward first.

"We have just heard it from Sampson. And I presume, Alfred, you are not so far gone as to insist on propagating insanity, by a marriage with his daughter."

At this conclusion, which struck her obliquely, though aimed at Alfred, Jane sighed gently; and her dream of earthly happiness seemed to melt away.

But Alfred ground his teeth, and replied with great bitterness and emotion: "I think, sir, you are the last man who ought to congratulate yourself on the affliction that has fallen on that unhappy family I aspire to enter, all the more that now they have calamities for me to share——"

"More fool you," put in Mr. Hardie, calmly.

—"For I much fear you are one of the causes of that calamity."

Mr. Hardie assumed a puzzled air: "I don't see how that can be: do you, Jenny? Sampson told us the causes: a wound on the head, a wound in the arm, bleeding, cupping, &c."

"There may be other causes Dr. Sampson has not been told of—yet."

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"Possibly. I really don't know what you allude to."

The son fixed his eyes on the father, and leaned across the table to him, till their faces nearly met.

"THE FOURTEEN THOUSAND POUNDS, SIR."

CHAPTER XI

MR. HARDIE was taken by surprise for once, and had not a word to say; but looked in his son's face, mute and gasping as a fish.

During this painful silence his children eyed him inquiringly; but not with the same result; for one face is often read differently by two persons: to Jane, whose intelligence had no aids, he seemed unaffectedly puzzled; but Alfred discerned beneath his wonder the terror of detection rising, and then thrust back by the strong will: that stoical face shut again like an iron door; but not quickly enough: the right words, the "open sesame" had been spoken, and one unguarded look had confirmed Alfred's vague suspicions of foul play: he turned his own face away: he was alienated by the occurrences of the last few months, but Nature and tender reminiscences still held him by some fibres of the heart: in a moment of natural indignation he had applied the touchstone; but its success grieved him; he could not bear to go on exposing his father; so he left the room with a deep sigh, in

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which pity mingled with shame and regret; he wandered out into the silent night, and soon was leaning on the gate of Albion Villa, gazing wistfully at the windows, and sore perplexed, and nobly wretched.

As he was going out, Mr. Hardie raised his eyebrows with a look of disinterested wonder and curiosity; and touched his forehead to Jane, as much as to say, "Is he disordered in his mind?"

As soon as they were alone, he asked her coolly what Alfred meant. She said she had no idea. Then he examined her keenly about this fourteen thousand pounds: and found, to his relief, Alfred had never even mentioned it to her.

And now Richard Hardie, like his son, wanted to be alone, and think over this new peril, that had risen in the bosom of his own family: and, for once the company of his favourite child was irksome: he made an excuse and strolled out in his turn into the silent night. It was calm and clear: the thousand holy eyes, under which men prefer to do their crimes—except when they are in too great a hurry to wait—looked down and seemed to wonder anything can be so silly as to sin: and beneath their pure gaze the man of the world pondered with all his soul. He tormented himself with conjectures: through what channel did Alfred suspect him? through the Dodds? were they aware of their loss? had the pocket-book spoken? If so, why had not Mrs. Dodd or her son attacked him? But then perhaps Alfred was their agent: they wished to try

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a friendly remonstrance through a mutual friend before proceeding to extremities; this accorded with Mrs. Dodd's character as he remembered her.

The solution was reasonable; but he was relieved of it by recollecting what Alfred had said, that he had not entered the house since the Bank broke.

On this he began to hope Alfred's might be a mere suspicion he could not establish by any proof, and at all events he would lock it in his own breast like a good son: his never having given a hint even to his sister favoured this supposition.

Thus meditating, Mr. Hardie found himself at the gate of Albion Villa.

Yet he had strolled out with no particular intention of going there. Had his mind, apprehensive of danger from that quarter, driven his body thither?

He took a look at the house: and the first thing he saw was a young lady leaning over the balcony, and murmuring softly to a male figure below, whose outline Mr. Hardie could hardly discern, for it stood in the shadow. Mr. Hardie was delighted: "Aha, Miss Juliet," said he, "if Alfred does not visit you, some one else does. You have soon supplied your peevish lover's place." He then withdrew softly from the gate, not to disturb the intrigue, and watched a few yards off; determined to see who Julia's nightly visitor was, and give Alfred surprise for surprise.

He had not long to wait: the man came away directly, and walked, head erect, past Mr. Hardie, and glanced full in his face, but did not vouchsafe

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him a word. It was Alfred himself. Mr. Hardie was profoundly alarmed, and indignant: "The young traitor! Never enter the house? no; but he comes and tells her everything directly, under her window, on the sly: and, when he is caught—defies me to my face." And now he suspected female cunning and malice in the way that thunderbolt had been quietly prepared for him and launched, without warning, in his very daughter's presence, and the result just communicated to Julia Dodd.

In a very gloomy mood he followed his son, and heard his firm though elastic tread on the frosty ground, and saw how loftily he carried his head: and from that moment feared, and very, very, nearly hated him.

The next day he feigned sick, and sent for Osmond. That worthy prescribed a pill and a draught, the former laxative, the latter astringent. This ceremony performed, Mr. Hardie gossipped with him; and, after a détour or two, glided to his real anxiety. "Sampson tells me you know more about Captain Dodd's case than he does: he is not very clear as to the cause of the poor man's going mad."

"The cause? Why Apoplexy."

"Yes, but I mean what caused the apoplexy?"

Mr. Osmond replied that Apoplexy was often idiopathic.* Captain Dodd, as he understood, had

* "Arising of itself." A term rather hastily applied to disorders the coming signs of which have not been detected by the medical attendant.

The birth of Topsy was idiopathic—in that learned lady's opinion.

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fallen down in the street in a sudden fit: "but as for the mania, that is to be attributed to an insufficient evacuation of blood while under the apoplectic coma."

"Not bled enough! Why Sampson says it is because he was bled too much."

Osmond was amused at this; and repeated that the mania came of not being bled enough.

The discussion was turned into an unexpected quarter by the entrance of Jane Hardie, who came timidly in and said, "Oh, Mr. Osmond, I cannot let you go without telling you how anxious I am about Alfred. He is so thin, and pale, and depressed."

"Nonsense, Jane," said Mr. Hardie; "have we not all cause to be dejected in this house?" But she persisted gently that there was more in it than that; and his headaches were worse: and she could not be easy any longer without advice.

"Ah, those headaches," said Mr. Osmond, "they always made me uneasy. To tell the truth, Miss Hardie, I have noticed a remarkable change in him, but I did not like to excite apprehensions: and so he mopes, does he? seeks solitude, and is taciturn, and dejected?"

"Yes. But I do not mind that so much as his turning so pale and thin."

"Oh, it is all part of one malady."

"Then you know what is the matter?"

"I think I do: and yours is a wise and timely

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anxiety. Your brother's is a very delicate case of a hyperæsthetic character; and I should like to have the advice of a profound physician. Let me see, Dr. Wycherley will be with me to-morrow: may I bring him over as a friend?"

This proposal did not at all suit Mr. Hardie; he put his own construction on Alfred's pallor and dejection, and was uneasy at the idea of his being cross-questioned by a couple of doctors:

"No, no," said he, "Taff has fancies enough already; I cannot have you gentlemen coming here to fill his head with many more."

"Oh, he has fancies, has he?" said Osmond, keenly. "My dear sir, we shall not say one word to *him*: that might irritate him: but I should like *you* to hear a truly learned opinion."

Jane looked so imploringly, that Mr. Hardie yielded a reluctant assent, on those terms.

So the next day, by appointment, Mr. Osmond introduced his friend Dr. Wycherley: bland and bald, with a fine head, and a face naturally intelligent, but crossed every now and then by gleams of vacancy; a man of large reading, and of tact to make it subserve his interests. A voluminous writer on certain medical subjects, he had so saturated himself with circumlocution, that it distilled from his very tongue: he talked like an Article; a quarterly one; and so gained two advantages: 1st, he rarely irritated a fellow-creature; for, if he began a sentence hot, what with its length, and what with its

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windiness, he was apt to end it cool: item stabs by polysyllables are pricks by sponges. 2ndly, this foible earned him the admiration of fools; and that is as invaluable, as they are innumerable.

Yet was there in the mother-tongue he despised, one gem of a word he vastly admired: like most quarterly writers. That charming word, the pet of the polysyllabic, was "OF."

He opened the matter in a subdued and sympathizing tone well calculated to win a loving father, such as Richard Hardie—was not.

"My good friend here informs me, sir, you are so fortunate as to possess a son of distinguished abilities, and who is at present labouring under some of those precursory indications of incipient disease of the cerebro-psychical organs, of which I have been, I may say, somewhat successful in diagnosing the symptoms. Unless I have been inadvertently misinformed, he has, for a considerable time, and only with slight intermissions, experienced persistent headache of a kephalalgic or true cerebral type, and has now advanced to the succeeding stage of taciturnity and depression, not* unaccompanied with isolation, and probably, constipation: but as yet without hallucination, though possibly, and, as my experience of the great majority of these cases would induce me to say, probably, he is not† undisturbed by one or more of those latent, and, at first, trifling aberrations, either of the intelligence,

* Anglicè, "accompanied." † Anglicè, "disturbed."

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or the senses, which in their preliminary stages escape the observation of all but the expert nosologist. In that case, sir, be assured you have acted the part of a wise and affectionate parent in soliciting the opportune attention of a psychological Physician to these morbid phenomena at present in the initial process of incubation."

"There you see," said Osmond, "Dr. Wycherley agrees with me: yet I assure you I have only detailed the symptoms, and not the conclusion I had formed from them."

Jane inquired timidly what that conclusion was.

"Miss Hardie, we think it one of those obscure tendencies which are very curable if taken in time——" Dr. Wycherley ended the sentence—"But no longer remediable if the fleeting opportunity is allowed to escape, and diseased action to pass into diseased organisation."

Jane looked awestruck at their solemnity; but Mr. Hardie, who was taking advice against the grain, turned satirical: "Gentlemen," said he, "be pleased to begin by moderating your own obscurity; and then perhaps I shall see better how to cure my son's: what the deuce are you driving at?"

The two doctors looked at one another inquiringly; and so settled how to proceed. Dr. Wycherley explained to Mr. Hardie that there was a sort of general unreasonable and superstitious feeling abroad, a kind of terror of the complaint with which his son was threatened; "*and which*, instead of the most

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remediable of disorders, is looked at as the most incurable of maladies:" it was on this account he had learned to approach the subject with singular caution, and even with a timidity which was kinder in appearance than in reality; that he must admit.

"Well, you may speak out, as far as I am concerned," said Mr. Hardie, with consummate indifference.

"Oh yes!" said Jane, in a fever of anxiety; "pray conceal nothing from us."

"Well then, sir, I have not as yet had the advantage of examining your son personally, but, from the diagnostics, I have no doubt whatever he is labouring under the first foreshadowings of cerebro-psychical perturbation."

Jane and her father stared at him: he might as well have recited them the alphabet backwards.

"Well then," said he, observing his learning had missed fire, "to speak plainly, the symptoms are characteristic of the initiatory stage of the germination of a morbid state of the phenomena of intelligence."

His unprofessional hearers stared another inquiry.

"In one word, then," said Dr. Wycherley, waxing impatient at their abominable obtuseness, "it is the premonitory stage of the precursory condition of an organic affection of the brain."

"Oh!" said Mr. Hardie, carelessly: "I see; the boy is going mad."

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The doctors stared in their turn at the prodigious coolness of a tender parent.

"Not exactly," said Dr. Wycherley; "I am habitually averse to exaggeration of symptoms. Your son's suggest to me 'the Incubation of Insanity,' nothing more."

Jane uttered an exclamation of horror: the doctor soothed her with an assurance that there was no cause for alarm. "Incipient aberration" was of easy cure: the mischief lay in delay. "Miss Hardie," said he, paternally, "during a long and busy professional career, it has been my painful province to witness the deplorable consequences of the non-recognition, by friends and relatives, of the precedent symptoms of those organic affections of the brain, the relief of which was within the reach of well-known therapeutic agents if exhibited seasonably."

He went on to deplore the blind prejudice of unprofessional persons; who choose to fancy that other diseases creep, but Insanity pounces, on a man: which he expressed thus neatly; "that other deviations from organic conditions of health are the subject of clearly defined though delicate gradations, but that the worst and most climacteric forms of cerebro-psychical disorder are suddenly developed affections presenting no evidence of any antecedent cephalic organic change, and unaccompanied by a premonitory stage, or by incipient symptoms."

This chimera he proceeded to confute, by experience: he had repeatedly been called in to cases

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of mania described as sudden, and almost invariably found the patient had been cranky for years; which he condensed thus; "His conduct and behaviour for many years previously to any symptom of mental aberration being noticed, had been characterised by actions quite irreconcilable with the supposition of the existence of perfect sanity of intellect."

He instanced a parson, whom he had lately attended, and found him as constipated and convinced he was John the Baptist engaged to the Princess Mary as could be.

"But upon investigation of this afflicted ecclesiastic's antecedent history, I discovered that, for years before this, he had exhibited conduct incompatible with the hypothesis of a mind whose equilibrium had been undisturbed: he had caused a number of valuable trees to be cut down on his estate, without being able to offer a sane justification for such an outrageous proceeding: and had actually disposed of a quantity of his patrimonial acres, '*and which*' clearly he never would have parted with had he been in anything resembling a condition of sanity."

"Did he sell the land and timber below the market price?" inquired Mr. Hardie, perking up, and exhibiting his first symptom of interest in the discussion.

"On that head, sir, my informant, his heir-at-law, gave me no information: nor did I enter into that class of detail; you naturally look at morbid phe-

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moneta in a commercial spirit, but we regard them medically; and, all this time, most assiduously visiting the sick of his parish and preaching admirable sermons."

The next instance he gave was of a stockbroker suffering under general paralysis and a rooted idea that all the *specie* in the Bank of England was his, and ministers in league with foreign governments to keep him out of it.

"Him," said the doctor, "I discovered to have been for years guilty of conduct entirely incompatible with the hypothesis of undisordered mental functions. He had accused his domestics of peculation, and had initiated legal proceedings with a view of prosecuting in a court of law one of his oldest friends."

"Whence you infer that, if my son has not for years been doing cranky acts, he is not likely to be deranged at present."

This adroit twist of the argument rather surprised Dr. Wycherley. However, he was at no loss for a reply. "It is not Insanity, but the Incubation of Insanity, which is suspected in your intelligent son's case: and the best course will be for me to enumerate in general terms the several symptoms of 'the Incubation of Insanity:'" he concluded with some severity, "after that, sir, I shall cease to intrude what I fear is an unwelcome conviction."

The Parent, whose levity and cold reception of good tidings he had thus mildly, yet with due

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dignity, rebuked, was a man of the world; and liked to make friends, not enemies; so he took the hint, and made a very civil speech, assuring Dr. Wycherley that, if he ventured to differ from him, he was none the less obliged by the kind interest he took in a comparative stranger: and would be very glad to hear all about the "Incubation of Insanity." He added, "The very expression is new to me."

Dr. Wycherley bowed slightly; and complied:

"One diagnostic preliminary sign of abnormal cerebral action is Kephalalgia, or true cerebral headache; I mean persistent headache, which is not accompanied by a furred tongue, or other indicia significant of abdominal or renal disorder as its origin."

Jane sighed. "He has sad headaches."

"The succeeding symptom is a morbid affection of sleep. Either the patient suffers from Insomnia; or else from Hypersomnia, which we subdivide into sopor, carus, and lethargus; or thirdly from Kakosomnia, or a propensity to mere dozing, and to all the morbid phenomena of dreams."

"Papa," said Jane, "poor Alfred sleeps very badly: I hear him walking at all hours of the night."

"I thought as much," observed Dr. Wycherley; "Insomnia is the commonest feature. To resume; the insidious advance of morbid thought is next marked by high spirits, or else by low spirits; generally the latter. The patient begins by moping, then

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shows great lassitude and ennui, then becomes abstracted, moody, and occupied with a solitary idea."

Jane clasped her hands, and the tears stood in her eyes; so well did this description tally with poor Alfred's case.

"And at this period," continued Dr. Wycherley, "my experience leads me to believe that some latent delusion is generally germinating in the mind, though often concealed with consummate craft by the patient: the open development of this delusion is the next stage, and, with this last morbid phenomenon, incubation ceases and insanity begins. Sometimes, however, the illusion is physical rather than psychical, of the sense rather than of the intelligence. It commences at night: the incubator begins by seeing nocturnal visions, often of a photopsic* character, or hearing nocturnal sounds, neither of which have any material existence, being conveyed to his optic or auricular nerves not from without, but from within, by the agency of a disordered brain. These the reason, hitherto unimpaired, combats at first, especially when they are nocturnal only: but being reproduced, and becoming diurnal, the judgment succumbs under the morbid impression produced so repeatedly. These are the ordinary antecedent symptoms characteristic of the incubation of insanity; to which are frequently added somatic exaltation, or, in popular language, physical excitability—a disposition to knit the brows

* Luminous.

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—great activity of the mental faculties—or else a well marked decline of the powers of the understanding—an exaggeration of the normal conditions of thought—or a reversal of the mental habits and sentiments, such as a sudden aversion to some person hitherto beloved, or some study long relished and pursued."

Jane asked leave to note these all down in her note-book.

Mr. Hardie assented adroitly; for he was thinking whether he could not sift some grain out of all this chaff. Should Alfred blab his suspicions, here were two gentlemen who would at all events help him to throw ridicule on them.

Dr. Wycherley having politely aided Jane Hardie to note down "the preliminary process of the Incubation of disorders of the Intellect," resumed: "Now, sir, your son appears to be in a very inchoate stage of the malady: he has cerebral Kephalalgia and Insomnia——"

"And, oh doctor, he knits his brows often; and has given up his studies; won't go back to Oxford this term."

"Exactly; and seeks isolation, and is a prey to morbid distraction and reverie: but has no palpable illusions; has he?"

"Not that I know of," said Mr. Hardie.

"Well but," objected Jane, "did not he say something to you very curious the other night; about Captain Dodd and fourteen thousand pounds?"

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Mr. Hardie's blood ran cold:

"No," he stammered, "not that I remember."

"Oh yes he did, papa: you have forgotten it: but at the time you were quite puzzled what he could mean: and you did so." She put her finger to her forehead: and the doctors interchanged a meaning glance.

"I believe you are right, Jenny," said Mr. Hardie, taking the cue so unexpectedly offered him: "he did say some nonsense I could not make head nor tail of; but we all have our crotchets; there, run away, like a good girl, and let me explain all this to our good friends here: and mind, not a word about it to Alfred."

When she was gone, he said, "Gentlemen, my son is madly in love; that is all."

"Oh, Erotic monomania is a very ordinary phase of insanity."

"His unreasonable passion for a girl he knows he can never marry makes him somewhat crotchety and cranky: that, and over-study, may have unhinged his mind a little: suppose I send him abroad? my good brother will find the means; or we could advance it him, I and the other trustees: he comes into ten thousand pounds in a month or two."

The doctors exchanged a meaning look. They then dissuaded him earnestly from the idea of continental travel.

"Cœlum non animam mutant qui trans mare currunt," said Wycherley, and Osmond explained that Alfred would brood abroad as well as at home, if he

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went alone: and Dr. Wycherley summed up thus: "The most advisable course is to give him the benefit of the personal superintendence of some skilful physician possessed of means and appliances of every sort for soothing and restraining the specific malady."

Mr. Hardie did not at first see the exact purport of this oleaginous periphrasis. *He knitted his brows.* Presently he caught a glimpse: but said he thought confinement was hardly the thing to drive away melancholy.

"Not in all respects," replied Dr. Wycherley: "but, on the other hand, a little gentle restraint is the safest way of effecting a disruption of the fatal associations that have engendered and tend to perpetuate the disorder. Besides, the medicinal appliances are invaluable; including, as they do, the nocturnal and diurnal attendance of a Psycho-physical physician, who knows the Psychosomatic relation of body and mind, and can apply physical remedies, of the effect of which on the physical instrument of intelligence, the grey matter of the brain, we have seen so many examples."

The good doctor then feelingly deplored the inhumanity of parents and guardians in declining to subject their incubators to opportune and salutary restraint under the more than parental care of a Psychosomatic physician. On this head he got quite warm, and inveighed against the abominable cruelty of the thing.

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"It is contrary," said he, "to every principle of justice and humanity, that a fellow-creature, deranged perhaps only on one point, should for the want of the early attention of those, whose duty it is to watch over him, linger out his existence separated from all who are dear to him, and condemned without any crime to be a prisoner for life."

Mr. Hardie was puzzled by this sentence, in which the speaker's usual method was reversed, and the thought was bigger than the words.

The doctors did not interfere, but let the suggestion ferment.

"Oh," said Mr. Hardie, at last, "I see. We ought to incarcerate our children to keep them from being incarcerated."

"That is one way of putting it with a vengeance," said Mr. Osmond, staring. "No; what my good friend means——"

"Is this; where the patient is possessor of an income of such a character as to enable his friends to show a sincere affection by anticipating the consequences of neglected morbid phenomena of the brain, there a lamentable want of humanity is exhibited by the persistent refusal to the patient, on the part of his relatives, of the incalculable advantage of the authoritative advice of a competent physician accompanied with the safeguards and preventives of——"

But ere the mellifluous pleonast had done oiling his paradox with fresh polysyllables, to make it slip

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into the Banker's narrow understanding, he met with a curious interruption. Jane Hardie fluttered in to say a man was at the door accusing himself of being deranged.

"How often this sort of coincidence occurs," said Osmond, philosophically.

"Do not refuse him, dear papa; it is not for money: he only wants you to give him an order to go into a lunatic asylum."

"Now, there is a sensible man," said Dr. Wycherley.

"Well but," objected Mr. Hardie, "if he is a sensible man, why does he want to go to an asylum?"

"Oh, they are all sensible at times," observed Mr. Osmond.

"*Singularly so*," said Dr. Wycherley, warmly. And he showed a desire to examine this paragon, who had the sense to know he was out of his senses.

"It would be but kind of you, sir," said Jane; "poor, poor man!" She added, he did not like to come in, and would they mind just going out to him?

"Oh no, not in the least: especially as you seem interested in him."

And they all three rose and went out together, and found the petitioner at the front door. Who should it be, but James Maxley!

His beard was unshaven, his face haggard, and everything about him showed a man broken in spirit as well as fortune: even his voice had lost

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half its vigour, and, whenever he had uttered a consecutive sentence or two, his head dropped on his breast, pitiably: indeed, this sometimes occurred in the middle of a sentence, and then the rest of it died on his lips.

Mr. Richard Hardie was not prepared to encounter one of his unhappy creditors thus publicly, and, to shorten the annoyance, would have dismissed him roughly: but he dared not; for Maxley was no longer alone, nor unfriended: when Jane left him, to intercede for him, a young man joined him, and was now comforting him with kind words, and trying to get him to smoke a cigar: and this good-hearted young gentleman was the Banker's son in the flesh, and his opposite in spirit, Mr. Alfred Hardie.

Finding these two in contact, the Doctors interchanged demurest glances.

Mr. Hardie asked Maxley sullenly what he wanted of them.

"Well, sir," said Maxley, despondently, "I have been to all the other magistrates in the borough; for what with losing my money, and what with losing my missus, I think I bain't quite right in my head; I do see such curious things, enough to make a body's skin creep at times." And down went his head on his chest.

"Well?" said Mr. Hardie, peevishly: "go on: you went to the magistrates, and what then?"

Maxley looked up, and seemed to recover the thread: "Why they said 'no,' they couldn't send me

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to the 'sylum, not from home: I must be a pauper first. So then my neighbours they said I had better come to you." And down went his head again.

"Well but," said Mr. Hardie, "you cannot expect me to go against the other magistrates."

"Why not, sir? You have had a hatful o' money of me: the other gentlemen han't had a farthing. They owes me no service, but you does: nine hundred pounds' worth if ye come to that."

There was no malice in this; it was a plain brokenhearted man's notion of give and take; but it was a home-thrust all the same; and Mr. Hardie was visibly discountenanced, and Alfred more so.

Mr. Osmond, to relieve a situation so painful, asked Maxley rather hastily what were the curious things he saw.

Maxley shuddered. "The unreasonablest beasts, sir, you ever saw or heard tell on: mostly snakes and dragons. Can't stoop my head to do no work, for them, sir. Bless your heart, if I was to leave you gentlemen now, and go and dig for five minutes in my garden, they would come about me as thick as slugs on cabbage: why 'twas but yester'en I tried to hoe a bit, and up come the fearfullest great fiery sarpint: scared me so I heaved my hoe and laid on 'un properly: presently I seemed to come out of a sort of a kind of a red mist into the clear: and there laid my poor missus's favourite hen; I had been and killed her for a sarpint!" He sighed: then, after a moment's pause, lowered his voice to a whisper,

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"Now suppose I was to go and take some poor Christian for one of these gre-at bloody dragons I do see at odd times, I might do him a mischief you know, and not mean him no harm neither. Oh dooce take and have me locked up, gentlemen, dooce now: tellee I ain't fit to be about, my poor head is so mazed."

"Well, well," said Mr. Hardie, "I'll give you an order for the Union."

"What, make a pauper of me?"

"I cannot help it," said the magistrate: "it is the routine; and it was settled at a meeting of the bench last month that we must adhere to the rule as strictly as possible; the asylum is so full: and you know, Maxley, it is not as if you were dangerous."

"That I be, sir: I don't know what I'm a looking at, or a doing. Would I ha' gone and killed my poor Susan's hen if I hadn't a been beside myself? and she in her grave, poor dear: no, not for untold gold: and I be fond of that too; used to be however: but now I don't seem to care for money nor nothing else." And his head dropped.

"Look here, Maxley, old fellow," said Alfred, sarcastically, "you must go to the workhouse; and stay there till you hoe a pauper; take him for a crocodile, and kill him; then you will get into an asylum whether the Barkington magistrates like it or not: that is the *routine*, I believe; and as reasonable as most routine."

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Dr. Wycherley admired Alfred for this, and whispered Mr. Osmond, "how subtly they reason."

Mr. Hardie did not deign to answer his son, who indeed had spoken at him, and not to him.

As for poor Maxley, he was in sad and sober earnest, and could not relish nor even take in Alfred's irony: he lifted his head and looked Mr. Hardie in the face.

"You be a hard man," said he, trembling with emotion. "You robbed me and my missus of our all, you ha' broke her heart, and turned my head, and if I was to come and kill *you* 'twould only be clearing scores. 'Stead of that I comes to you like a lamb, and says give me your name on a bit of paper, and put me out of harm's way. 'No,' says you, 'go to the workhouse!' Be you in the workhouse? You that owes me nine hundred pounds and my dead missus?" With this he went into a rage, took a packet out of his pocket, and flung it at Mr. Hardie's head before any one could stop him.

But Alfred saw his game, stepped forward, and caught it with one hand, and with the dexterity of a wicket-keeper, within a foot of his father's nose. "How's that, Umpire?" said he: then, a little sternly, "Don't do that again, Mr. Maxley, or I shall have to give you a hiding—to keep up appearances." He then put the notes in his pocket, and said quietly, "*I* shall give you your money for these, before the year ends."

"You won't be quite so mad as that, I hope," re-

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monstrated his father. But he made no reply: they very seldom answered one another now.

"Oh," said Dr. Wycherley, inspecting him like a human curiosity, "nullum magnum ingenium sine mixturâ dementiæ."

"Nec parvum sine mixturâ stultitiæ," retorted Alfred in a moment: and met his offensive gaze with a point-blank look of supercilious disdain.

Then, having shut him up, he turned to Osmond: "Come," said he, "prescribe for this poor fellow, who asks for a hospital, so Routine gives him a workhouse: come, you know there is no limit to your skill and good nature: you cured Spot of the worms, cure poor old Maxley of his snakes; oblige me."

"That I will, Mr. Alfred," said Osmond, heartily: and wrote a prescription on a leaf of his memorandum-book, remarking that, though a simple purgative, it had made short work of a great many serpents and dragons, and not a few spectres and hobgoblins into the bargain.

The young gentleman thanked him graciously, and said kindly to Maxley, "Get that made up—here's a guinea—and I'll send somebody to see how you are to-morrow."

The poor man took the guinea, and the prescription, and his head drooped again, and he slouched away.

Dr. Wycherley remarked significantly that his conduct was worth imitating by *all persons similarly*

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situated: and concluded oracularly: "Prophylaxis is preferable to therapeusis."

"Or, as *Porson* would say, 'Prevention is better than cure.'"

With this parting blow the Oxonian suddenly sauntered away, unconscious, it seemed, of the existence of his companions.

"I never saw a plainer case of Incubation," remarked Dr. Wycherley, with vast benevolence of manner.

"Maxley's?"

"Oh, no; that is parochial. It is your profoundly interesting son I alluded to. Did you notice his supercilious departure? And his morbid celerity of repartee?"

Mr. Hardie replied with some little hesitation, "Yes; and, excuse me, I thought he had rather the best of the battle with you."

"Indubitably so," replied Dr. Wycherley: "they always do: at least such is *my* experience. If ever I break a lance of wit with an incubator, I calculate with confidence on being unhorsed with abnormal rapidity: and rare, indeed, are the instances in which my anticipations are not promptly and fully realised: by a similar rule of progression the incubator is seldom a match for the confirmed maniac, either in the light play of sarcasm, the coruscations of wit, or the severer encounters of dialectical ratiocination."

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"Dear, dear, dear! Then how is one to know a genius from a madman?" inquired Jane.

"By sending for a psychological physician."

"If I understand the doctor right, the two things are not opposed," remarked Mr. Hardie.

Dr. Wycherley assented, and made a remarkable statement in confirmation: "One half of the aggregate of the genius of the country is at present under restraint; fortunately for the community; and still more fortunately for itself."

He then put on his gloves, and, with much kindness but solemnity, warned Mr. Hardie not to neglect his son's case, nor to suppose that matters could go on like this without "disintegrating or disorganising the grey matter of the brain. I admit," said he, "that in some recorded cases of insanity the brain on dissection has revealed no signs of structural or functional derangement, and that, on the other hand, considerable encephalic disorganisation has been shown to have existed in other cases without aberration or impairment of the reason: but such phenomena are to be considered as pathological curiosities, with which the empiric would fain endeavour to disturb the sound general conclusions of science. The only safe mode of reasoning on matters so delicate and profound is à priori: and, as it may safely be assumed as a self-evident proposition, that disturbed intelligence bears the same relation to the brain disordered respiration does to the lungs, it is

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not logical, reasoning à priori, to assume the possibility that the studious or other mental habits of a Kephalalgic, and gifted, youth, can be reversed, and erotic monomania germinate, with all the morbid phenomena of isolation, dejection of the spirits, and abnormal exaltation of the powers of wit and ratiocination, without some considerable impairment, derangement, disturbance, or modification, of the psychical, motorial, and sensorial functions of the great cerebral ganglion. But it would be equally absurd to presuppose that these several functions can be disarranged for months, without more or less disorganisation of the medullary, or even of the cineritious, matter of the encephalon. *Therefore*—dissection of your talented son would doubtless reveal at this moment either steatomatous or atheromatous deposits in the cerebral blood-vessels, or an encysted abscess, probably of no very recent origin, or, at the least, considerable inspissation, and opacity, of the membranes of the encephalon, or more or less pulpy disorganisation of one or other of the hemispheres of the brain: *good* morning!!"

"Good morning, sir: and a thousand thanks for your friendly interest in my unhappy boy."

The Psycho-cerebrals "took their departure" (Psycho-cerebral for "departed"), and left Jane Hardie brimful of anxiety. Alfred was not there to dispose of the tirade in two words, "Petitio principii," and so smoke on: and, not being an university woman, she could not keep her eye on the original

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assumption while following the series of inferences the learned doctor built so neatly, story by story, on the foundation *of* the quicksand *of* a loose conjecture."

"Now not a word of this to Alfred," said Mr. Hardie. "I shall propose to him a little foreign tour, to amuse his mind."

"Yes, but papa, if some serious change is really going on inside his poor head."

Mr. Hardie smiled sarcastically. "Don't you see that if the mind can wound the brain, the mind can cure it?" Then, after a while, he said parentally, "My child, I must give you a lesson: men of the world use enthusiasts—like those two I have just been drawing out—for their tools; we don't let them make tools of us. Osmond, you know, is jackal to an asylum in London; Dr. Wycherley, I have heard, keeps two or three such establishments by himself or his agents: blinded by self-interest, and that of their clique—what an egotistical world it is to be sure!—they would confine a melancholy youth in a gloomy

* So novices sitting at a conjuror see him take a wedding-ring, and put it in a little box before a lady; then cross the theatre with another little box, and put that before another lady: "Hey presto! pass!" in box 2 is discovered a wedding-ring, which is instantly *assumed* to be *the* ring: on this their green minds are fixed, and with this is sham business done: Box 1, containing the real ring all the time, is overlooked; and the confederate, in livery or not, does what he likes with it: imprisons it in an orange—for the good of its health.

So poor Argan, when Fleurant enumerates the consequences of his omitting a single—dose shall I say?—is terrified by the threatened disorders, which succeed to each other logically enough, all the absurdity being in the first link of the chain; and from that his mind is diverted.

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house, among afflicted persons, and give him nothing to do but brood; and so turn the scale against his reason: but *I* have my children's interest at heart more than my own; I shall send him abroad, and so amuse his mind with fresh objects, break off sad associations, and restore him to a brilliant career. I count on you to second me in my little scheme for his good."

"That I will, papa."

"Somehow, I don't know why, he is coolish to me."

"He does not understand you, as I do, my own papa."

"But he is affectionate with you, I think."

"Oh yes, more than ever: trouble has drawn us closer. Papa, in the midst of our sorrow, how much we have to be thankful for to the Giver of all good things!"

"Yes, little angel: and you must improve Heaven's goodness by working on your brother's affection, and persuading him to this continental tour."

Thus appealed to, Jane promised warmly: and the man of the world, finding he had a blind and willing instrument in the one creature he loved, kissed her on the forehead, and told her to run away, for here was Mr. Skinner, who no doubt wanted to speak on business.

Skinner, who had in fact been holding respectfully aloof for some time, came forward on Jane's retiring, and in a very obsequious tone requested a private

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interview. Mr. Hardie led the way into the little dining-room.

They were no sooner alone than Skinner left off fawning, very abruptly; and put on a rugged resolute manner that was new to him: "I am come for my commission," said he sturdily.

Mr. Hardie looked an inquiry.

"Oh, you don't know what I mean, of course," said the little clerk, almost brutally: "I've waited, and waited, to see if you would have the decency, and the gratitude, and the honesty, to offer me a trifle out of It; but I see I might wait till doomsday before you would ever think of thinking of anybody but yourself. So now shell out without more words, or I'll blow the gaff." The little wretch raised his voice louder and louder at every sentence.

"Hush! hush! Skinner," said Mr. Hardie, anxiously, "you are under some delusion. When did I ever decline to recognise your services? I always intended to make you a present, a handsome present."

"Then why didn't ye *do* it without being forced? Come, sir, you can't draw the wool over Noah Skinner's eyes; I have had you watched, and you are looking towards the U. S., and that is too big a country for me to hunt you in. I'm not to be trifled with: I am not to be palavered: give me a thousand pounds of It this moment, or I'll blow the whole concern, and you along with it."

"A thousand pounds?!"

"Now look at that!" shrieked Skinner. "Serves

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me right for not saying seven thousand. What right have you to a shilling of it more than I have? If I had the luck to be a burglar's pal instead of a banker's, I should have half. Give it me this moment, or I'll go to Albion Villa and have you took up for a thief; as you are."

"But I haven't got it on me."

"That's a lie: you carry it where *he* did; close to your heart: I can see it bulge: there, Job was a patient man, but his patience went at last." With this he ran to the window and threw it open.

Hardie entreated him to be calm. "I'll give it you, Skinner," said he, "and with pleasure, if you will give me some security that you will not turn round, as soon as you have got it, and be my enemy."

"Enemy of a gent that pays me a thousand pounds? nonsense! Why should I? We are in the same boat: behave like a man, and you know you have nothing to fear from me: but I will—not —go halves in a theft for nothing: would you? Come, how is it to be, peace or war? Will you be content with thirteen thousand pounds that don't belong to you, not a shilling of it, or will you go to jail a felon, and lose it every penny?"

Mr. Hardie groaned aloud, but there was no help for it. Skinner was on sale: and *must* be bought.

He took out two notes for five hundred pounds each, and laid them on the table, after taking their numbers.

Skinner's eyes glistened: "Thank you, sir," said

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he. He put them in his pocket. Then he said quietly, "Now you have taken the numbers, sir, so I'll trouble you for a line to make me safe against the criminal law. You are a deep one; you might say I robbed you."

"That is a very unworthy suspicion, Skinner; and a childish one."

"Oh, it is diamond cut diamond. A single line, sir, just to say that in return for his faithful services, you have given Noah Skinner two notes for 500*l.* Nos. 1084 and 85."

"With all my heart—on your giving me a receipt for them."

It was Skinner's turn to hesitate. After reflecting, however, on all the possible consequences, he saw nothing to fear; so he consented.

The business completed, a magic change took place in the little clerk. "Now we are friends again, sir: and I'll give you a piece of advice; mind your eye with Mr. Alfred; he is down on us."

"What do you mean?" inquired Mr. Hardie, with ill disguised anxiety.

"I'll tell you, sir. He met me this morning: and says he to me, 'Skinner, old boy, I want to speak a word to you.' He puts his hands on my shoulder, and turns me round, and says he all at one time, 'The fourteen thousand pounds!' You might have knocked me down with a feather. And he looked me through like a gimlet, mind ye. 'Come now,' says he, 'you see I know all; make a clean breast

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of it.' So then I saw he didn't know *all*, and I brazened up a bit: told him I hadn't a notion what he meant. 'Oh yes I did,' he said, 'Captain Dodd's fourteen thousand pounds! It had passed through my hands.' Then I began to funk again at his knowing that: perhaps he only guessed it after all: but at the time I thought he knew it; I was flustered, ye see. But I said, 'I'd look at the books; but I didn't think his deposit was anything like that.' 'You little equivocating humbug,' says he: 'and which was better, to tell the truth at once and let Captain Dodd, which never did me any harm, have his own, or to hear it told me in the felon's dock?' those were his words, sir: and they made my blood run cold; and if he had gone on at me like that, I should have split, I know I should: but he just said, 'There, your face has given your tongue the lie: you haven't brains enough to play the rogue.' Oh, and —another thing—he said he wouldn't talk to the sparrow-hawk any more, when there was the kite hard by: so by that I guess your turn is coming, sir; so mind your eye. And then he turned his back on me with a look as if I was so much dirt. But I didn't mind that; I was glad to be shut of him at any price."

This intelligence discomposed Mr. Hardie terribly: it did away with all hope that Alfred meant to keep his suspicions to himself. "Why did you not tell me this before?" said he, reproachfully.

Skinner's sharp visage seemed to sharpen as he replied, "Because I wanted a thousand pounds first."

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"Curse your low cunning!"

Skinner laughed. "Good-bye, sir: take care of yourself and I'll take care of mine. I'm afraid of Mr. Alfred and the stone jug, so I'm off to London, and there I'll un-Skinner myself into Mr. Something or other, and make my thousand pounds breed ten." And he whipped out, leaving his master filled with rage and dismay.

"Outwitted even by this little wretch!"

He was now accountable for fourteen thousand pounds, and had only thirteen thousand left, if forced to reimburse; so that it was quite on the cards for him to lose a thousand pounds by robbing his neighbour and risking his own immortal jewel: this galled him to the quick; and altogether his equable temper began to give way; it had already survived half the iron of his nerves. He walked up and down the parlour chafing like an irritated lion. In which state of his mind the one enemy he now feared and hated walked quietly into the room, and begged for a little serious conversation with him.

"It is like your effrontery," said he: "I wonder you are not ashamed to look your father in the face."

"Having wronged nobody I can look anybody in the face," replied Alfred, looking him in the face point-blank.

At this swift rejoinder, Mr. Hardie felt like a too confident swordsman, who, attacking in a passion, suddenly receives a prick that shows him his antago-

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nist is not one to be trifled with. He was on his guard directly, and said coldly, "You have been belying me to my very clerk."

"No, sir: you are mistaken: I have never mentioned your name to your clerk."

Mr. Hardie reflected on what Skinner had told him, and found he had made another false move. He tried again: "Nor to the Dodds?" with an incredulous sneer.

"Nor to the Dodds," replied Alfred, calmly.

"What, not to Miss Julia Dodd?"

"No, sir, I have seen her but once, since—I discovered about the fourteen thousand pounds."

"What fourteen thousand pounds?" inquired Mr. Hardie, innocently.

"What fourteen thousand pounds!" repeated the young man disdainfully. Then suddenly turning on his father, with red brow and flashing eyes: "the fourteen thousand pounds Captain Dodd brought home from India: the fourteen thousand pounds I heard him claim of you with curses: ay, miserable son, and miserable man, that I am, I heard my own father called a villain; and what did my father reply? Did you hurl the words back into your accuser's throat? No: you whispered, 'Hush! hush! I'll bring it you down.' Oh, what a hell Shame is!"

Mr. Hardie turned pale, and almost sick: with these words of Alfred's fled all hope of ever deceiving him.

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"There, there," said the young man, lowering his voice from rage to profound sorrow: "I don't come here to quarrel with my father, nor to insult him, God knows: and I entreat you for both our sakes not to try my temper too hard by these childish attempts to blind me: and, sir, pray dismiss from your mind the notion that I have disclosed to any living soul my knowledge of this horrible secret: on the contrary, I have kept it gnawing my heart, and almost maddening me at times. For my own personal satisfaction I have applied a test both to you and Skinner; but that is all I have done: I have not told dear Julia, nor any of her family; and now, if you will only listen to me, and do what I entreat you to do, she shall never know; oh, never."

"Oho!" thought Mr. Hardie, "he comes with a proposal: I'll hear it, anyway."

He then took a line well known to artful men: he encouraged Alfred to show his hand; maintaining a complete reserve as to his own; "You say you did not communicate your illusion about this fourteen thousand pounds to Julia Dodd that night: may I ask then (without indiscretion) what did pass between you two?"

"I will tell you, sir. She saw me standing there and asked me in her own soft angel voice if I was unhappy. I told her I must be a poor creature if I could be happy. Then she asked me, with some hesitation I thought, why I was unhappy. I said, because I could not see the path of honour and duty

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clear: that, at least, was the purport. Then she told me that in all difficulties she had found the best way was to pray to God to guide her; and she begged me to lay my care before him, and ask his counsel. And then I thanked her; and bade her good night, and she me; and that was all that passed between us two unhappy lovers, whom you have made miserable; and even cool to one another; but not hostile to you. And you played the spy on us, sir; and misunderstood us, as spies generally do. Ah, sir! a few months ago you would not have condescended to that."

Mr. Hardie coloured, but did not reply. He had passed from the irritable into the quietly vindictive stage.

Alfred then deprecated further discussion of what was past, and said abruptly: "I have an offer to make you: in a very short time I shall have ten thousand pounds; I will not resign my whole fortune; that would be unjust to myself, and my wife; and I loathe and despise Injustice in all its forms, however romantic or plausible. But, if you will give the Dodds their 14,000*l.*, I will share my little fortune equally with you: and thank you, and bless you. Consider, sir, with your abilities and experience five thousand pounds may yet be the nucleus of a fortune; a fortune built on an honourable foundation. I know you will thrive with my five thousand pounds ten times more than with their fourteen thousand; and enjoy the blessing of blessings, a clear conscience."

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Now this offer was no sooner made than Mr. Hardie shut his face, and went to mental arithmetic, like one doing a sum behind a thick door. He would have taken ten thousand: but five thousand did not much tempt him: besides, would it be five thousand clear? He already owed Alfred two thousand five hundred. It flashed through him that a young man who loathed and despised Injustice—even to himself—would not consent to be diddled by him out of one sum while making him a present of another: and then there was Skinner's thousand to be reimbursed. He therefore declined in these terms:

"This offer shows me you are sincere in these strange notions you have taken up. I am sorry for it: it looks like insanity. These nocturnal illusions, these imaginary sights and sounds, come of brooding on a single idea, and often usher in a calamity one trembles to think of. You have made me a proposal: I make you one: take a couple of hundred pounds (I'll get it from your trustees) and travel the Continent for four months; enlarge and amuse your mind with the contemplation of nature and manners and customs; and if that does not clear this phantom 14,000*l.* out of your head, I am much mistaken."

Alfred replied that foreign travel was his dream: but he could not leave Barkington while there was an act of justice to be done.

"Then do *me* justice, boy," said Mr. Hardie, with wonderful dignity, all things considered. "Instead

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of brooding on your one fantastical idea, and shutting out all rational evidence to the contrary, take the trouble to look through my books: and they will reveal to you a fortune, not of fourteen thousand, but of eighty thousand pounds, honourably sacrificed in the vain struggle to fulfil my engagements: who, do you think, will believe, against such evidence, the preposterous tale you have concocted against your poor father? Already the tide is turning, and all, who have seen the accounts of the Bank, pity me; they will pity me still more if ever they hear my own flesh and blood insults me in the moment of my fall; sees me ruined by my honesty, and living in a hovel, yet comes into that poor but honest abode, and stabs me to the heart by accusing me of stealing fourteen thousand pounds: a sum that would have saved me, if I could only have laid my hands on it."

He hid his face, to conceal its incongruous expression: and heaved a deep sigh.

Alfred turned his head away and groaned.

After a while he rose from his seat and went to the door; but seemed reluctant to go: he cast a longing, lingering look on his father, and said beseechingly: "Oh think! you are not my flesh and blood more than I am yours; is all the love to be on my side? have I no influence even when right is on my side?" Then he suddenly turned and threw himself impetuously on his knees; "Your father was the soul of honour; your son loathed fraud and injustice from his cradle; you stand between two

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generations of Hardies, and belong to neither: do but reflect one moment how bright a thing honour is, how short and uncertain a thing life is, how sure a thing retribution is, in this world or the next: it is your guardian angel that kneels before you now, and not your son; oh, for Christ's sake, for my mother's sake, listen to my last appeal. You don't know me: I cannot compound with injustice. Pity me, pity her I love, pity yourself!"

"You young viper!" cried the father, stung with remorse but not touched with penitence. "Get away, you amorous young hypocrite: get out of my house, get out of my sight, or I'll spit on you and curse you at my feet."

"Enough!" said Alfred, rising and turning suddenly calm as a statue: "let us be gentlemen, if you please, even though we must be enemies. Good-bye, my father that *was*."

And he walked gently out of the room, and, as he passed the window, Mr. Hardie heard his great heart sob.

He wiped his forehead with his handkerchief. "A hard tussle," thought he, "and with my own unnatural, ungrateful flesh and blood: but I have won it: he hasn't told the Dodds; he never will: and, if he did, who would believe him, or them?"

At dinner there was no Alfred; but after dinner a note to Jane informing her he had taken lodgings in the town, and requesting her to send his books and clothes in the evening. Jane handed the note to

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her father: and sighed deeply. Watching his face as he read it, she saw him turn rather pale, and look more furrowed than ever.

"Papa!" said she, "what *does* it all mean?"

"I am thinking."

Then, after a long pause, he ground his teeth and said, "It means—WAR."

CHAPTER XII.

LONG before this open rupture Jane Hardie had asked her father sorrowfully, whether she was to discontinue her intimacy with the Dodds; she thought of course he would say "Yes;" and it cost her a hard struggle between inclination and filial duty to raise the question. But Mr. Hardie was anxious her friendship with that family should continue; it furnished a channel of news, and in case of detection might be useful to avert or soften hostilities; so he answered rather sharply, "On no account: the Dodds are an estimable family; pray be as friendly with them as ever you can." Jane coloured with pleasure at this most unexpected reply: but her wakeful conscience reminded her this answer was given in ignorance of her attachment to Edward Dodd; and urged her to confession. But at that Nature recoiled: Edward had not openly declared his love to her; so modest pride, as

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well as modest shame, combined with female cowardice to hold back the avowal.

So then Miss Tender Conscience tormented herself; and recorded the struggle in her diary; but briefly, and in terms vague and typical; not a word about "a young man"—or "crossed in love"—but one obscure and hasty slap at the carnal affections, and a good deal about "the saints in prison," and "the battle of Armageddon."

Yet, to do her justice, laxity of expression did not act upon her conduct and warp that, as it does most mystical speakers'.

To obey her father to the letter, she maintained a friendly correspondence with Julia Dodd, exchanging letters daily: but, not to disobey him in the spirit, she ceased to visit Albion Villa. Thus she avoided Edward, and extracted from the situation the utmost self-denial, and the least possible amount of "carnal pleasure," as she naïvely denominated an interchange of worldly affection, however distant and respectful.

One day she happened to mention her diary, and say it was a present comfort to her, and instructive to review. Julia, catching at every straw of consolation, said she would keep one too, and asked a sight of Jane's for a model. "No, dear friend," said Jane: "a diary should be one's self on paper."

This was fortunate: it precluded that servile imitation, in which her sex excels even mine; and consequently the two records reflect two good girls,

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instead of one in two skins; and may be trusted to conduct this narrative forward, and relieve its monotony a little: only of course the reader must not expect to see the plot of a story carried minutely out in two crude compositions written with an object so distinct: he must watch for glimpses and make the most of indications. Nor is this an excessive demand upon his intelligence; for, if he cannot do this with a book, how will he do it in real life, where male and female characters reveal their true selves by glimpses only, and the gravest and most dramatic events give the diviner so few and faint signs of their coming?

Extracts from Julia Dodd's Diary:

"Dec. 5th. It is all over; they have taken papa away to an asylum: and the house is like a grave, but for our outbursts of sorrow. Just before he went away the medal came—oh no, I cannot. Poor, poor mamma!

8 P.M. In the midst of our affliction Heaven sent us a ray of comfort: the kindest letter from a lady, a perfect stranger. It *came* yesterday; but now I have got it to copy: oh, bless it; and the good, kind writer.

DEAR MADAM,

I scarcely know whether to hope or to fear that your good husband may have mentioned my name to you; however, he is just the man to pass over both my misbehaviour and his own gallantry;

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so I beg permission to introduce myself. I and my little boy were passengers by the Agra; I was spoiled by a long residence in India, and gave your husband sore trouble by resisting discipline, refusing to put out my light at nine o'clock, and in short by being an unreasonable woman, or rather a spoiled child. Well, all my little attempts at a feud failed; Captain Dodd did his duty, and kept his temper provokingly, the only revenge he took was a noble one; he jumped into the sea after my darling Freddy, and saved him from a watery grave, and his mother from madness or death; yet he was himself hardly recovered from a wound he had received in defending us all against pirates. Need I say more to one who is herself a mother? You will know how our little misunderstanding ended after that. As soon as we were friends I made him talk of his family; yourself, Edward, Julia, I seem to know you all.

When the ruffian, who succeeded our good captain, had wrecked poor us, and then deserted us, your husband resumed the command, and saved Freddy and me once more by his courage, his wonderful coolness, and his skill. Since then the mouse has been at work for the lion: I despair of conveying any pleasure by it to a character so elevated as Captain Dodd; his reward must be his own conscience; but we poor little women like external shows, do we not? and so I thought a medal of the Humane Society might give some pleasure to you

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and Miss Dodd. Never did medal nor order repose on a nobler heart. The case was so strong, and so well supported, that the society did not hesitate: and you will receive it very soon after this.

You will be surprised, dear madam, at all this from a stranger to yourself, and will perhaps set it down to a wish to intrude on your acquaintance. Well then, dear madam, you will not be far wrong. I *should* like much to know one, whose character I already seem acquainted with; and to convey personally my gratitude and admiration of your husband, I could pour it out more freely to you, you know, than to him.

I am,

Dear Madam,

Yours very faithfully,

LOUISA BERESFORD.

And the medal came about an hour before the fly to take him away. His dear name was on it, and his brave courageous acts.

Oh, shall I ever be old enough and hard enough to speak of this without stopping to cry?

We fastened it round his dear neck with a ribbon. Mamma would put it inside his clothes for fear the silver should tempt some wretch: I should never have thought of that: is there a creature so base? And we told the men how he had gained it (they were servants of the asylum), and we showed them how brave and good he was, and would be again if

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they would be kind to him and cure him. And mamma bribed them with money to use him kindly: I thought they would be offended and refuse it: but they took it, and their faces showed she was wiser than I am. *He* keeps away from us too. It is nearly a fortnight now."

"Dec. 7th. Aunt Eve left to-day. Mamma kept her room and could not speak to her: cannot forgive her interfering between papa and her. It does seem strange that any one but mamma should be able to send papa out of the house, and to such a place; but it is the law: and Edward, who is all good sense, says it was necessary; he says mamma is unjust: grief makes her unreasonable. I don't know who is in the right: and I don't much care: but I know I am sorry for Aunt Eve, and very, very sorry for mamma."

"Dec. 8th. I am an egotist: found myself out this morning; and it is a good thing to keep a diary. It* was overpowered at first by grief for mamma: but now the house is sad and quiet I am always thinking of *him;* and that is egotism.

Why *does* he stay away so? I almost wish I could think it was coldness or diminished affection; for I fear something worse; something to make *him* wretched. Those dreadful words papa spoke before he was afflicted! words I will never put on paper; but they ring in my ears still; they appal me: and

* Egotism. The abstract quality evolved from the concrete term egotist by feminine art, without the aid of grammar.

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then found at their very door! Ah, and I knew I *should* find him near that house. And now he keeps away."

"Dec. 9th. All day trying to comfort mamma. She made a great effort and wrote to Mrs. Beresford."

POOR MAMMA'S LETTER.

"DEAR MADAM,

"Your kind and valued letter reached us in deep affliction: and I am little able to reply to you as you deserve. My poor husband is very ill; so ill that he no longer remembers the past, neither the brave acts that have won him your esteem, nor even the face of his loving and unhappy wife, who now thanks you with many tears for your sweet letter. Heartbroken as my children and I are, we yet derive some consolation from it. We have tied the medal round his neck, madam, and thank you far more than we can find words to express.

In conclusion, I pray Heaven that, in your bitterest hour, you may find the consolation you have administered to us: no, no, I pray you may never, never, stand in such need of comfort.

I am,

Dear Madam,

Yours gratefully and sincerely,

LUCY DODD."

"Dec. 10th, Sunday. At St. Anne's in the morning. Tried hard to apply the sermon. He spoke of

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griefs, but so coldly; surely he never felt one: *he* was not there. Mem.: always pray against wandering thoughts on entering church."

"Dec. 11th. A diary is a dreadful thing. Everything must go down now, and, amongst the rest, that the poor are selfish. I could not interest one of mine in mamma's sorrows; no, they must run back to their own little sordid troubles, about money and things. I was so provoked with Mrs. Jackson (she owes mamma so much) that I left her hastily: and that was Impatience. I had a mind to go back to her; but would not; and that was Pride. Where is my Christianity?

A kind letter from Jane Hardie. But no word of *him*."

"Dec. 12th. To-day Edward told me plump I must not go on taking things out of the house for the poor: mamma gave me the reason. 'We are poor ourselves, thanks to——' And then she stopped. Does she suspect? How can she? She did not hear those two dreadful words of papa's? They are like two arrows in my heart. And so we are poor: she says we have scarcely anything to live upon after paying the two hundred and fifty pounds a year for papa."

"Dec. 13th. A comforting letter from Jane. She sends me Hebrews xii. 11, and says, 'Let us take a part of the Bible, and read two chapters prayerfully, at the same hour of the day: will ten o'clock in the morning suit you? and, if so, will you choose where

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to begin?' I will, sweet friend, I will: and then, though some cruel mystery keeps us apart, our souls will be together over the sacred page, as I hope they will one day be together in heaven; yours will at any rate. Wrote back, yes, and a thousand thanks, and should like to begin with the Psalms: they are sorrowful, and so are we. And I must pray not to think too much of *him*.

If everything is to be put down one does, I cried long and bitterly to find I had written that I must pray to God against *him*."

"Dec. 14th. It is plain he never means to come again. Mamma says nothing, but that is out of pity for me; I have not read her dear face all these years for nothing. She is beginning to think him unworthy, when she thinks of him at all. There is a mystery; a dreadful mystery: may he not be as mystified too, and perhaps tortured like me with doubts and suspicions? they say he is pale and dejected. Poor thing! But then oh why not come to me and say so? Shall I write to him? No, I will cut my hand off sooner."

"Dec. 16th. A blessed letter from Jane. She says 'Letter writing on ordinary subjects is a sad waste of time and very unpardonable among His people.' And so it is; and my weak hope, daily disappointed, that there may be something in her letter, only shows how inferior I am to my beloved friend. She says, 'I should like to fix another hour for us two to meet at the Throne together: will five o'clock suit

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you? we dine at six: but I am never more than half an hour dressing.'

The friendship of this saint, and her bright example, is what Heaven sends me in infinite mercy and goodness to soothe my aching heart a little: for *him* I shall never see again.

I have seen him this very evening.

It was a beautiful night: I went to look at—the world to come I call it—for I believe the redeemed are to inhabit those very stars hereafter, and visit them all in turn—and this world I now find is a world of sorrow and disappointment—so I went on the balcony to look at a better one: and oh it seemed so holy, so calm, so pure, that heavenly world: I gazed and stretched my hands towards it for ever so little of its holiness and purity; and, that moment, I heard a sigh. I looked, and there stood a gentleman just outside our gate, and it was *him*. I nearly screamed, and my heart beat so. He did not see me: for I had come out softly, and his poor head was down, down upon his breast; and he used to carry it so high, a little, little, while ago; too high some said; but not I. I looked, and my misgivings melted away; it flashed on me as if one of those stars had written it with its own light in my heart—'There stands Grief; not Guilt.' And before I knew what I was about I had whispered 'Alfred!' The poor boy started and ran towards me: but stopped short and sighed again. My heart yearned: but it was not for me to make advances to him, after

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his unkindness: so I spoke to him as coldly as ever I could, and I said, 'You are unhappy.'

He looked up to me, and then I saw even by that light that he is enduring a bitter, bitter struggle: *so* pale, *so* worn, *so* dragged! Now how many times have I cried, this last month? more than in all the rest of my life a great deal. 'Unhappy!' he said; 'I must be a contemptible thing if I was not unhappy.' And then he asked me should not I despise him if he was happy. I did not answer that: but I asked him why he was unhappy. And when I had, I was half frightened: for he never evades a question the least bit.

He held his head higher still, and said, 'I am unhappy because I cannot see the path of honour.'

Then I babbled something, I forget what: then he went on like this—ah, I never forget what *he* says—he said Cicero says Æquitas ipsa lucet per se; something significat * something else: and he repeated it slowly for me, he knows I know a little Latin; and told me that was as much as to say 'Justice is so clear a thing, that whoever hesitates must be on the road of wrong. And yet,' he said, bitterly, '*I* hesitate and doubt, in a matter of right and wrong, like an Academic philosopher weighing and balancing mere speculative straws.' Those were his very words. 'And so,' said he, 'I am miserable; deserving to be miserable.'

Then I ventured to remind him that he, and I, and

* Dubitatio cogitationem significat injuriæ.

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all Christian souls, had a resource not known to heathen philosophers, however able. And I said, 'Dear Alfred, when I am in doubt and difficulty, I go and pray to Him to guide me aright: have you done so?' No, that had never occurred to him: but he *would*, if I made a point of it; and at any rate he could not go on in this way; I should soon see him again, and, once his mind was made up, no shrinking from mere consequences, he promised me. Then we bade one another good night, and he went off holding his head as proudly as he used: and poor silly me flattered, and nearly hysterical, as soon as I quite lost sight of him."

"Dec. 17th. At church in the morning: a good sermon. Notes and analysis. In the evening Jane's clergyman preached. She came. Going out I asked her a question about what we had heard; but she did not answer me. At parting she told me she made a rule not to speak coming from church, not even about the sermon. This seemed austere to poor me. But of course she is right. Oh, that I was like her."

"Dec. 18th. Edward is coming out. This boy, that one has taught all the French, all the dancing, and nearly all the Latin he knows, turns out to be one's superior, infinitely; I mean in practical good sense. Mamma had taken her pearls to the jeweller and borrowed two hundred pounds. He found this out and objected. She told him a part of it was required to keep him at Oxford. 'Oh indeed,' said he: and we

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thought of course there was an end: but next morning he was off before breakfast, and the day after he returned from Oxford with his caution money, forty pounds, and gave it mamma; she had forgotten all about it. And he had taken his name off the college books and left the university for ever. The poor, gentle, tears of mortification ran down his mother's cheeks, and I hung round her neck, and scolded him like a vixen; as I am. We might have spared tears and fury both, for he is neither to be melted nor irritated by poor little us. He kissed us and coaxed us like a superior being, and set to work in his quiet, sober, ponderous way, and proved us a couple of fools to our entire satisfaction, and that without an unkind word: for he is as gentle as a lamb, and as strong as ten thousand elephants. He took the money back and brought the pearls home again, and he has written 'SOYEZ DE VOTRE SIÈCLE' in great large letters, and has pasted it on all our three bedroom doors, inside. And he has been all these years quietly cutting up the Morning Advertiser, and arranging the slips with wonderful skill and method. He calls it 'digesting the 'Tiser!' and you can't ask for any *modern* information, great or small, but he'll find you something about it in this digest. Such a folio! It takes a man to open and shut it. And he means to be a sort of little papa in this house, and mamma means to let him. And indeed it is *so* sweet to be commanded; besides, it saves thinking for oneself; and that *is* such a worry."

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"Dec. 19th. Yes, they have settled it: we are to leave here, and live in lodgings to save servants. How we are to exist even so, mamma cannot see; but Edward can; he says we two have got popular talents, and *he knows the markets* (what does that mean, I wonder), and the world in general. I asked him wherever he picked it up, his knowledge: he said, 'In the Tiser.' I asked him would he leave the place where *she* lives. He looked sad, but said, 'Yes: for the good of us all.' So he is better than I am; but who is not? I wasted an imploring look on him; but not on mamma: she looked back to me, and then said sadly, 'Wait a few days, Edward, for—*my* sake.' That meant for poor credulous Julia's, who still believes in him. My sweet mother!"

"Dec. 21st. Told mamma to-day I would go for a governess, to help her, since we are all ruined. She kissed me and trembled; but she did not say 'No:' so it will come to that. He will be sorry. When I do go, I think I shall find courage to send him a line: just to say I am sure *he* is not to blame for withdrawing. Indeed, how could I ever marry a man whose father I have heard my father call——" (the pen was drawn through the rest).

"Dec. 22nd. A miserable day: low spirited and hysterical. We are really going away. Edward has begun to make packing cases: I stood over him and sighed, and asked him questions: he said he was going to take unfurnished rooms in London, send up

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what furniture is absolutely necessary, and sell the rest by auction, with the lease of our dear, dear house, where we were all so happy once. So, what with 'his knowledge of the markets, and the world,' and his sense, and his strong will, we have only to submit. And then he is so kind, too; 'Don't cry, little girl,' he said. 'Not but what I could turn on the waters myself if there was anything to be gained by it. *Shall* I cry, Ju,' said he, 'or shall I whistle? I think I'll whistle.' And he whistled a tune right through while he worked with a heart as sick as my own, perhaps. Poor Edward!"

"Dec. 23rd. My Christian friend has her griefs too. But then *she* puts them to profit: she says to-day, 'We are both tasting the same flesh-crucifying but soul-profiting experience.' Her every word is a rebuke to me: torn at this solemn season of the year with earthly passions. Went down after reading her letter, and played and sang the Gloria in excelsis of Pergolesi, with all my soul. And, on repeating it, burst out crying in the middle. Oh shame! shame!"

"Dec. 24th. Edward started for London at five in the morning to take a place for us. The servants were next told, and received warning; the one we had the poorest opinion of, she is such a flirt, cried, and begged mamma to let her share our fallen fortunes, and said she could cook a little and would do her best. I kissed her violently, and quite forgot I was a young lady till she herself reminded me; and

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she looked frightened at mamma. But mamma only smiled through her tears and said, 'Think of it quietly, Sarah, before you commit yourself.'"

"I am now sitting in my old room, cold as a stone: for I have packed up some things: so the first step is actually taken. Oh, if I but knew that he was happy! Then I could endure anything. But how can I think so? Well, I will go, and never tell a soul what I suspect. And he cannot tell, even if he knows: for it is his father. Jane, too, avoids all mention of her own father and brother more than is natural. Oh, if I could only be a child again!

Regrets are vain; I will cease even to record them; these diaries feed one's selfishness, and the unfortunate passion, that will make me a bad daughter and an ungrateful soldier of Him who was born as to-morrow: to your knees, false Christian! to your knees!"

"I am calmer now; and feel resigned to the will of Heaven; or benumbed; or something. I will pack this box and then go down and comfort my mother; and visit my poor people, perhaps for the last time: ah me!

A knock at the street door! His knock! I know every echo of his hand, and his foot. Where is my composure now? I flutter like a bird. I will not go down. He will think I love him so.

At least I will wait till he has nearly gone.

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Elizabeth has come to say I am wanted in the drawing-room.

So I *must* go down whether I like or no."

"Bedtime. Oh that I had the pen of a writer to record the scene I have witnessed, worthily. When I came in, I found mamma and him both seated in dead silence. He rose and looked at me and I at him: and years seemed to have rolled over his face since last I saw it; I was obliged to turn my head away; I curtseyed to him distantly, and may Heaven forgive me for that: and we sat down, and presently turned round and all looked at one another like the ghosts of the happy creatures we once were all together.

Then Alfred began, not in his old imperative voice, but scarce above a whisper; and oh the words such as none but himself in the wide world would have spoken—I love him better than ever; I pity him; I adore him; he is a scholar; he is a chevalier; he is the soul of honour; he is the most unfortunate and proudest gentleman beneath the sun; oh, my darling! my darling!!

He said, 'Mrs. Dodd, and you Miss Dodd, whom I loved before I lost the right to ask you to be mine, and whom I shall love to the last hour of my miserable existence, I am come to explain my own conduct to you, and to do you an act of simple justice, too long delayed. To begin with myself, you must know that my understanding is of the Academic School;

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I incline to weigh proofs before I make up my mind. But then I differ from that school in this, that I cannot think myself to an eternal standstill; (such an expression! but what does that matter, it was *his*;) I am a man of action: in Hamlet's place I should have either turned my ghost into ridicule, or my uncle into a ghost; so I kept away from you while in doubt: but, now I doubt no longer, I take my line; ladies, you have been swindled out of a large sum of money.'

My blood ran cold at these words. Surely nothing on earth but a man could say this right out like that.

Mamma and I looked at one another; and what did I see in her face, for the first time? Why that she had her suspicions too, and had been keeping them from me. Pitying angel!

He went on: 'Captain Dodd brought home several thousand pounds?'

Mamma said 'Yes.' And I think she was going to say how much, but he stopped her and made her write the amount in an envelope, while he took another and wrote in it with his pencil; he took both envelopes to me, and asked me to read them out in turn: I did; and mamma's said fourteen thousand pounds: and his said fourteen thousand pounds. Mamma looked such a look at me.

Then he turned to me: 'Miss Dodd, do you remember that night you and I met at Richard Hardie's door? Well, scarce five minutes before that, your

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father was standing on our lawn and called to the man, who was my father, in a loud voice—it rings in my ears now—"Hardie! Villain! give me back my money, my fourteen thousand pounds! give me my children's money, or may your children die before your eyes." Ah, you wince to hear me whisper these dreadful words: what, if you had been where I was, and heard them spoken, and in a terrible voice; the voice of Despair; the voice of Truth! Soon a window opened cautiously, and a voice whispered, "Hush! I'll bring it you down." And *this* voice was the voice of fear, of dishonesty, and of Richard Hardie.'

He turned deadly white when he said this, and I cried to mamma, 'Oh, stop him! stop him!' And she said, 'Alfred, think what you are saying. Why do you tell us what we had better never know?' He answered directly,

'Because it is the truth: and because I loathe injustice. Some time afterwards I taxed Mr. Richard Hardie with this fourteen thousand pounds: and his face betrayed him. I taxed his clerk, Skinner: and Skinner's face betrayed him: and he fled the town that very night.'

My mother looked much distressed and said, 'To what end do you raise this pitiable subject? Your father is a bankrupt, and we but suffer with the rest.'

'No, no,' said he, 'I have looked through the bankrupt's books, and there is no mention of the

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sum. And then who brought Captain Dodd here? Skinner: and Skinner is his detected confederate. It is clear to me poor Captain Dodd trusted that sum to *us* before he had the fit: beyond this all is conjecture.'

Mamma looked at me again, and said, 'What *am* I to do; or say?'

I screamed, 'Do nothing, say nothing: oh pray, pray make him hold his tongue, and let the vile money go. It is not *his* fault.'

'Do?' said the obstinate creature: 'why tell Edward, and let him employ a sharp attorney: you have a supple antagonist, and a daring one. Need I say I have tried persuasion, and even bribes: but he defies me. Set an attorney on him; or the police. Fiat Justitia, ruat cœlum.' I put both hands out to him and burst out, 'Oh, Alfred, why did you tell? A son expose his own father? For shame! for shame! I have suspected it all long ago: but *I* would never have told.'

He started a little; but said, 'Miss Dodd, you were very generous to me; but that is not exactly a reason why I should be a cur to you; and an accomplice in a theft by which you suffer. I have no pretensions to religion like my sister: so I can't afford to tamper with plain right and wrong. What, look calmly on and see one man defraud another? I can't do it. See *you* defrauded? you, Mrs. Dodd, for whom I profess affection and friendship? You, Miss Dodd, for whom I profess love and constancy?

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Stand and see you swindled into poverty? Of what do you think I am made? My stomach rises against it, my blood boils against it, my flesh creeps at it, my soul loathes it:' then after this great burst he seemed to turn so feeble: 'Oh,' said he, faltering, 'I know what I have done; I have signed the death warrant of our love, dear to me as life. But I can't help it. Oh, Julia, Julia, my lost love, you can never look on me again; you must not love a man you cannot marry, Cheat Hardie's wretched son. But what could I do? Fate offers me but the miserable choice of desolation or cowardly rascality. I choose desolation. And I mean to stand by my choice like a man. So good bye, ladies.'

The poor proud creature rose from his seat, and bowed stiffly and haughtily to us both, and was going away without another word, and, I do believe, for ever. But his soul had been too great for his body; his poor lips turned pale, and he staggered; and would have fallen, but mamma screamed to me, and she he loves so dearly, and abandons so cruelly, woke from a stupor of despair, and flew and caught him fainting in these arms."

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CHAPTER XIII.

"We laid the poor proud creature on the sofa, and bathed his face with eau de Cologne. He spoke directly, and said that was nice, and 'My head! my head!' And I don't think he was ever quite insensible, but he did not know what was going on, for presently he opened his eyes wide, and stared at us so, and then closed them with oh such a sigh; it swelled my heart almost to bursting. And to think I could say nothing: but mamma soothed him and insisted on his keeping quiet; for he wanted to run away from us. She was never so good to him before: she said, 'My dear child, you have my pity and my esteem; alas! that at your age you should be tried like this. How few in this sorry world would have acted like you: I should have sided with my own flesh and blood, for one.'

'What, right or wrong?' he asked.

'Yes,' said she, 'right or wrong.' Then she turned to me: 'Julia, shall all the generosity be on his side?'

I kissed her and clung to her, but dared not speak; but I was mad enough to hope, I scarcely

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know what, till she said in the same kind sorrowful voice, 'I agree with you; you can never be my son; nor Julia's husband. But as for that money, it revolts me to proceed to extremes against one, who after all is your father, my poor, poor, chivalrous boy.' But she would decide nothing without Edward; he had taken his father's place in this house. So then I gave all up, for Edward is made of iron. Alfred was clearer sighted than I, and never had a hope: he put his arm round mamma and kissed her, and she kissed him: and he kissed my hand, and crept away, and I heard his step on the stair, and on the road ever so far, and life seemed ended for me when I heard it no more.

Edward has come home. Mamma told him all: he listened gravely: I hung upon his lips; and at last the oracle spoke; and said, 'This is a nice muddle.'

More we could not get from him; he must sleep on it. O suspense! you torture! He had seen a place he thinks will suit us: it is a bad omen his saying that so soon after. As I went to bed I could not help whispering, 'If he and I are parted, so will you and Jane.' The cruel boy answered me *out loud*, 'Thank you, little girl: that is a temptation; and you have put me on my guard.'

Oh, how hard it is to understand a *man!* they *are* so impracticable with their justice and things. I came away with my cheeks burning, and my heart

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like a stone; to bed, but not to sleep. My poor, poor, unhappy, noble Alfred!"

"Dec. 27th. Mamma and Edward have discussed it: they say nothing to me. Can they have written to him? I go about my duties like a ghost; and pray for submission to the Divine will."

"Dec. 28th. To-day as I was reading by main force to Mrs. Eagleton's sick girl, came Sarah all in a hurry with, I was wanted, Miss. But I *would* finish my chapter, and O how hard the Devil tried to make me gabble it; so I clenched my teeth at him, and read it as if I was spelling it; and then *didn't* I fly?

He was there; and they all sat waiting for me. I was hot and cold all at the same time, and he rose and bowed to me, and I curtseyed to him, and sat down and took my work, and didn't know one bit what I was doing.

And our new oracle, Edward, laid down the law like anything. 'Look here, Hardie,' said he, 'if anybody but you had told us about this fourteen thousand pounds, I should have set the police on your governor before now. But it seems to me a shabby thing to attack a father on the son's information, especially when it's out of love for one of us he has denounced his own flesh and blood.'

'No, no,' said Alfred, eagerly, 'out of love of justice.'

'Ah, you think so, my fine fellow, but you would not have done it for a stranger,' said Edward. Then

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he went on: 'Of all blunders, the worst is to fall between two stools: look here, mamma; we decide, for the son's sake, not to attack the father: after that it would be very inconsistent to turn the cold shoulder to the son. Another thing, who suffers most by this fraud? why the man that marries Julia.' Alfred burst out impetuously, 'Oh, prove that to me, and let me be that sufferer.' Edward turned calmly to mamma: 'If the fourteen thousand pounds was in our hands, what should you do with it?'

The dear thing said she should settle at least ten thousand of it on Me, and marry Me to this poor motherless boy, 'whom I have learned to love myself,' said she.

'There,' said Edward, 'you see it is you who lose by your governor's—I wont say what—if you marry my sister.'

Alfred took his hand, and said, 'God bless you for telling me this.'

Then Edward turned to mamma and me; and said, 'This poor fellow has left his father's house because he wronged us: then this house ought to open its arms to him: that is only justice; but now to be just to our side; I have been to Mr. Crawford, the lawyer, and I find this Hardie junior has ten thousand pounds of his own. That ought to be settled on Julia, to make up for what she loses by Hardie senior's—I won't say what.'

'If anybody settles any of their trash on *me*, I'll

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beat them, and throw it in the fire,' said I; 'and I hated money.'

The oracle asked me directly did I hate clothes and food, and charity to the poor, and cleanliness, and decency? Then I didn't hate money, 'for none of these things can exist without money, you little romantic humbug; you shut up!'

Mamma rebuked him for his expressions, but approved his sentiments. But I did not care for his sentiments: for *he* smiled on me, and said, 'We two are of one mind; we shall transfer our fortune to Captain Dodd, whom my father has robbed. Julia will consent to share my honest poverty.'

'Well, we will talk about that,' said Edward, pompously.

'Talk about it without me, then,' I cried, and got up, and marched out indignant: only it was partly my low cunning to hide my face that I could not keep the rapture out of. And, as soon as I had retired with cold dignity, off I skipped into the garden to let my face loose, and I think they sent him after me; for I heard his quick step behind me; so I ran away from him as hard as I could; so of course he soon caught me; in the shrubbery where he first asked me to be his; and he kissed both my hands again and again like wildfire, as he is, and he said, 'You are right, dearest; let them talk of their trash while I tell you how I adore you; poverty with you will be the soul's wealth; even misfortune, by your side, would hardly be misfortune: let all the world

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go, and let you and I be one, and live together, and die together; for now I see I could not have lived without you, nor without your love.' And I whispered something on his shoulder, no matter what; what signifies the cackle of a goose? and we mingled our happy tears, and our hearts, and our souls. Ah, Love is a sweet, a dreadful passion: what we two have gone through for one another in a few months! He dined with us, and Edward and he sat a long, long, time talking; I dare say it was only about their odious money; still I envied Edward having him so long. But at last he came up, and devoured me with his lovely grey eyes, and I sang him Aileen Aroon, and he whispered things in my ear, oh, such sweet, sweet, idiotic, darling, things; I will not part with even the shadow of one of them by putting it on paper, only I am the blessedest creature in all the world; and I only hope to goodness it is not very wicked to be so happy as I am."

"Dec. 31st. It is all settled. Alfred returns to Oxford to make up for lost time; the time spent in construing me instead of Greek: and at the end of term he is to come of age and marry—somebody. Marriage! oh what a word to put down! It makes me tingle; it thrills me; it frightens me, deliciously: no, not deliciously; anything but: for suppose, being both of us fiery, and they all say one of them ought to be cold blooded for a pair to be happy, I should make him a downright bad wife. Why then I hope I shall die in a year or two out of

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my darling's way, and let him have a good one instead.

I'd come back from the grave and tear her to pieces."

"Jan. 4th. Found a saint in a garret over a stable. Took her my luncheon clandestinely; that is lady-like for 'under my apron:' and was detected and expostulated by Ned. He took me into his studio —it is carpeted with shavings—and showed me the Tiser digest, an enormous book he has made of newspaper cuttings all in apple-pie order; I mean alphabetical; and out of this authority he proved vice and poverty abound most wherever there are most charities. Oh, and 'the poor' a set of intoxicated sneaks, and Me a Demoralising Influence. It is all very fine: but why are there saints in garrets, and half-starved? that rouses all my evil passions, and I cannot bear it; it *is* no use."

"Jan. 6th. Once a gay day; but now a sad one. Mamma gone to see poor papa, where he is. Alfred found me sorrowful, and rested my forehead on his shoulder; that soothed me, while it lasted. I think I should like to grow there. Mem.! to burn this diary; and never let a creature see a syllable.

As soon as he was gone, prayed earnestly on my knees not to make an idol of him. For it is our poor idols that are destroyed for *our* weakness. Which really I cannot quite see the justice of."

"Jan. 8th. Jane does not approve my proposal that we should praise now and then at the same

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hour instead of always praying. The dear girl sends me her unconverted diary 'to show me she is "a brand."' I have read most of it. But really it seems to me she was always goodish: only she went to parties, and read novels, and enjoyed society.

There, I have finished it. Oh dear, how like her *un*converted diary is to my *converted* one!"

"Jan. 14th. A sorrowful day: he and I parted, after a fortnight of the tenderest affection, and that mutual respect, without which neither of *us*, I think, could love long. I had resolved to be very brave; but we were alone, and his bright face looked so sad; the change in it took me by surprise and my resolution failed; I clung to him. If gentlemen could interpret, as we can, he would never have left me. It is better as it is. He kissed my tears away as fast as they came: it was the first time he had ever kissed more than my hand: so I shall have that to think of, and his dear promised letters: but it made me cry more at the time, of course. Some day, when we have been married years and years, I shall tell him not to go and pay a lady for every tear; if he wants her to leave off.

The whole place so gloomy and vacant now."

"Jan. 20th. Poverty stares us in the face. Edward says we could make a modest living in London; and nobody be the wiser: but here we are known, and '*must* be ladies and gentlemen, and fools,' he says. He has now made me seriously promise not to give money and things out of the house to the poor: it is

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robbing my mother and him. Ah, now I see it *is* nonsense to despise money: here I come home sad from my poor people; and I used to return warm all over. And the poor old souls do not enjoy my sermons half so much as when I gave them things to eat along with them.

The dear boy, that I always loved dearly, but *admire* and love now that he has turned an intolerable tyrant, and he used to be Wax, has put down two maids out of our three, and brings our dinner up himself in a jacket, then puts on his coat and sits down with us, and we sigh at him and he grins and derides us; he does not care one straw for Pomp. And mamma and I have to dress one another now. And I like it."

"Jan. 30th. He says we may now, by great economy, subsist honestly till my wedding-day; but then mamma and he must '*absquatulate*.' Oh, what stout hearts men have. They can jest at sorrow even when, in spite of their great thick skins, they feel it. Ah, the real poor are happy; they marry, and need not leave the parish where their mother lives."

"Feb. 4th. A kind and most delicate letter from Jane. She says, 'Papa and I are much grieved at Captain Dodd's affliction, and deeply concerned at your loss by the Bank. Papa has asked Uncle Thomas for two hundred pounds, and I entreat you to oblige *me* by receiving it at my hands and applying it according to the dictates of your own affectionate heart.'

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Actually our Viceroy will not let me take it: he says he will not accept a crumb from the man who owes us a loaf."

"Feb. 8th. Jane mortified, and no wonder. If she knew how very poor we are, she would be surprised as well. I have implored her not to take it to heart, for that all will be explained one day, and she will see we *could* not.

His dear letters! I feed on them. We have no secrets, no two minds. He is to be a first class and then a private tutor. Our money is to go to mamma: it is he and I that are to work our fingers to the bone (I am so happy!), and never let them be driven by injustice from their home. But all this is a great secret. The Viceroy will be defeated, only I let him talk till Alfred is here to back me. No; it is *not* just the rightful owner of fourteen thousand pounds should be poor.

How shallow female education is: I was always led to suppose modesty is the highest virtue. No such thing! Justice is the queen of the virtues; *he* is justice incarnate."

"March 10th. On reperusing this diary, it is demoralising; very: it feeds self. Of all the detestable compositions! Me, Me, Me, from one end to another: for when it is not about myself, it is about Alfred, and that it is my he-Me though not my she-one. So now to turn over a new leaf: from this day I shall record only the things that happen in this house and what my betters say to *me*, not

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what I say; and the texts; and outline of the sermons; and Jane's Christian admonitions."

Before a resolve so virtuous all impure spirits retire, taking off their hats, bowing down to the very ground, and apprehending Small Beer.

CHAPTER XIII.

Extracts from Jane Hardie's Diary:

"MARCH 3RD. In my district again, the first time since my illness, from which I am indeed but half recovered. Spoke faithfully to Mrs. B. about her infidel husband: told her not to try and talk to him, but to talk to God about him. Gave her my tract, 'A quiet heart.' Came home tired. Prayed to be used to sharpen the sickles of other reapers."

"March 4th. At St. Philip's to hear the Bishop. In the midst of an excellent sermon on Gen. i. 2, he came out with the waters of baptism, to my horror: he disclaimed the extravagant view some of them take; then hankered after what he denied, and then partly unsaid *that* too. While the poor man was trimming his sails, I slunk behind a pillar in the corner of my pew, and fell on my knees, and prayed against the stream of poison flowing on the congregation. Oh, I felt like Jeremiah in his dungeon.

In the evening papa forbade me to go to church

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again: said the wind was too cold: I kissed him, and went up to my room and put my head between the pillows not to hear the bells. Prayed for poor[B] Alfred."

"March 5th. Sadly disappointed in J. D. I did hope He was embittering the world to her by degrees. But for some time past she writes in ill-concealed spirits.

Another friend, after seeking rest in the world, is now seeking it in Ritualism. May both be drawn from their rotten reeds to the cross.

> And oh this moral may my heart retain,
> All hopes of happiness on earth are vain."

"March 6th. The cat is out of the bag. She is corresponding with Alfred; indeed she makes no secret of it. Wrote her a[c] faithful letter. Received a short reply, saying I had made her unhappy, and begging me to suspend my judgment till she could undeceive me without giving me too much pain. What mystery is this?"

"March 7th. Alfred announces his unalterable determination to marry Julia. I read the letter to papa directly. He was silent for a long time: and then said, 'All the worse for both of them.' It was all I could do to suppress a thrill of carnal complacency at the thought this might in time pave the way to another union. Even to think of that now is a sin. 1 Cor. vii., 20-4, plainly shows that whatever position[D] of life we are placed in, there it is our duty to abide. A child, for instance, is placed in subjec-

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tion to her parents; and must not leave them without their consent."

"March 8th. Sent two cups of cold water to two fellow-pilgrims of mine on the way to Jerusalem, viz.: to E. H., Rom. viii. 1; to Mrs. M., Philipp. ii. 27.

Prayed for increase of humility. I am so afraid my great success[E] in His vineyard has seduced me into feeling as if there was a spring of living water in myself, instead of every drop being derived from the true fountain."

"March 9th. Dr. Wycherley closeted two hours with papa—papa had sent for him, I find. What is it makes me think that man is no true friend to Alfred in his advice? I don't like these roundabout speakers: the lively oracles are not roundabout."

"March 10th. My beloved friend and fellow-labourer, Charlotte D——, ruptured a blood-vessel[X] at 3 P.M., and was conveyed in the chariots of angels to the heavenly banqueting house, to go no more out. May I be found watching."

"March 11th. Dreadfully starved with these afternoon sermons. If they go on like this, I really *must* stay at home, and feed upon the word."

"March 12th. Alfred has written to his trustees, and announced his coming marriage, and told them he is going to settle all his money upon the Dodds. Papa quite agitated by this news: it did not come from Alfred; one of the trustees wrote to papa. Oh, the blessing of Heaven will never rest on this

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unnatural marriage. Wrote a faithful letter to Alfred while papa was writing to our trustee."

"March 13th. My book on Solomon's Song now ready for publication. But it is *so* difficult now-a-days to find a publisher for such a subject. The rage is for sentimental sermons, or else for fiction[s] under a thin disguise of religious biography."

"March 14th. Mr. Plummer, of whose zeal and unction I had heard so much, was in the town and heard of me, and came to see me by appointment just after luncheon. *Such* a sweet meeting. He came in and took my hand, and in that posture prayed that the Holy Spirit might be with us to make our conversation profitable to us, and redound to His glory. Poor man, his wife leads him a cat and dog life, I hear, with her jealousy. We had a *sweet* talk; he admires Canticles almost as much as I do[z]: and has promised to take my book and get it cast on the Lord[c] for me."

"March 15th. To *please*, one must not be faithful[u]. Miss L., after losing all her relations, and at thirty years of age, is to be married next week. She came to me and gushed out about the blessing of having at last one earthly friend to whom she could confide everything. On this I felt it my duty to remind her she might lose him by death, and then what a blank! and I was going on to detach her from the arm of flesh, when she burst out crying and left me abruptly; couldn't bear the truth, poor woman.

In the afternoon met *him* and bowed, and longed

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to speak, but thought it my duty not to: cried bitterly on reaching home."

"March 17th. Transcribed all the texts on Solomon's Song. It seems to be the way He has marked out for me to serve him."

"March 19th. Received this letter from Alfred:

'DEAR JANE,

I send you a dozen kisses and a piece of advice; learn more; teach less: study more; preach less: and don't be in such a hurry to judge and condemn your intellectual and moral superiors, on insufficient information.

Your affectionate brother,

ALFRED.'

A poor return for me loving his soul as my own. I do but advise him the self-denial I myself pursue. Woe be to him if he rejects it."

"March 20th. A perverse reply from J. D. I had proposed we should plead for our parents at the Throne. She says she fears that might seem like assuming the office of the mediator: and besides her mother is nearer Heaven than she is. What blindness! I don't know a more thoroughly unhealthy mind than poor Mrs. Dodd's. I am learning to pray walking. Got this idea from Mr. Plummer. How closely he walks! his mind so *exactly* suits mine."

"March 22nd. Alfred returned. Went to meet him at the station. How bright and handsome he

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looked! He kissed me so affectionately; and was as kind and loving as could be: I, poor unfaithful wretch, went hanging on his arm and had not the heart to dash his carnal happiness just then.

He is gone *there*."

"March 24th. Stole into Alfred's lodging when he was out; and, after prayer, pinned Deuteronomy xxvii. 16, Proverbs xiii. 1, and xv. 5, and Mark vii. 10, upon his bed-curtains."

"March 25th. Alfred has been in my room, and nailed Matthew vii. 1, Mark x. 7, and Ezek. xviii. 20, on my wall. He found my diary, and has read it, not to profit by, alas! but to scoff."

[Specimen of Alfred's comments. N.B. Fraternal criticism:

A. Nolo Episcopari.

B. It's an ill wind that blows nobody good.

D. The old trick; picking one text, straining it; and ignoring six. So then nobody, who is not born married, must get married.

E. Recipe. To know people's real estimate of themselves, study their language of self-depreciation. If, even when they undertake to lower themselves, they cannot help insinuating self-praise, be sure their humility is a puddle, their vanity is a well. This sentence is typical of the whole Diary, or rather Iary; it sounds Publican, smells Pharisee.

X. How potent a thing is language in the hand of a master! Here is sudden death made humorous by a few incongruous phrases neatly disposed.

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F. Excuse me; there is still a little market for the Liquefaction of Holy Writ, and the Perversion of Holy Writ; two deathless arts, which meet in your comment on the song you ascribe to Solomon.

Z. More than Mrs. Plummer does, apparently.

G. Apotheosis of the British public. How very like profaneness some people's piety is!

C. H. Faith, with this school, means anything the opposite of Charity.

I. You are morally truthful: but intellectually mendacious. The texts on Solomon's Song! You know very well there is not one. No grave writer in all Scripture has ever deigned to cite, or notice, that coarse composition; puellarum deliciæ.

J. Modest periphrasis for "I like it." Motto for this Diary; "Ego, et Deus meus."

K. In other words a good, old fashioned, sober, humble Christian, to whom the daring familiarities of your school seem blasphemies.

M. Here I recognise my sister; somewhat spoiled by a detestable sect; but lovable by nature (which she is for ever abusing); and therefore always amiable, when off her guard.]

"March 28th. Mr. Crawford the attorney called and told papa his son had instructed him to examine the trust-deed, and to draw his marriage settlement. Papa treated him with the greatest civility, and brought him the deed. He wanted to take it away to copy; but papa said he had better send a clerk here. Poor papa hid his distress from this gentle-

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man, though not from me; and gave him a glass of wine.

Then Mr. Crawford chatted, and let out Alfred had asked him to advance a hundred pounds for the wedding presents, &c. Papa said he might do so with perfect safety.

But the moment he was gone, his whole manner changed. He walked about in terrible anger and agitation: and then sat down and wrote letters; one was to uncle Thomas; and one to a Mr. Wycherley; I believe a brother of the doctor's. I never knew him so long writing two letters before.

Heard a noise in the road, and it was Mr. Maxley, and the boys after him hooting; they have found out his infirmity: what a savage animal is man, till grace changes him! The poor soul had a stick, and now and then turned and struck at them; but his tormentors were too nimble. I drew papa to the window, and showed him, and reminded him of the poor man's request. He answered impatiently what was that to him? 'we have a worse case nearer hand. Charity begins at home.' I ventured to say yes, but it did not begin *and* end at home."

"March 31. Mr. Osmond here to-day; and over my work I heard papa tell him Alfred is blackening his character in the town with some impossible story about fourteen thousand pounds. Mr. Osmond very kind and sympathising; set it all down to illusion; assured papa there was neither malice nor insincerity in it. 'But what the better am I for that?' said

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poor papa: 'if I am slandered, I am slandered.' And they went out together.

Papa seems to feel this engagement more than all his troubles, and, knowing by sad experience it is useless to expostulate with Alfred, I wrote a long and faithful letter to Julia just before luncheon, putting it to her as a Christian whether she could reconcile it to her profession to set a son against his father, and marry him in open defiance.

She replied 3 P.M. that her mother approved the marriage, and she owed no obedience, nor affection either, to *my* parent.

3·30. Sent back a line rebuking her for this quibble.

At 5 received a note from Mrs. Dodd proposing that the correspondence between myself and her daughter should cease *for the present*.

5·30. Retorted with an amendment that it should cease *for ever*. No reply. Such are worldlings! Remonstrance only galls them. And so in one afternoon's correspondence ends one more of my Christian friendships with persons of my own sex. This is the eighth, to which a carnal attachment has been speedily fatal.

In the evening Alfred came in looking very red, and asked me whether it was not self-reliant and uncharitable of me to condemn so many estimable persons, all better acquainted with the circumstances than I am. I replied with the fifth commandment. He bit his lip and said, 'We had better not meet

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again, until you have found out which is worthiest of honour, your father or your brother.' And with this he left abruptly; and something tells me I shall not see him again. My faithfulness has wounded him to the quick. Alas! Prayed for him: and cried myself to sleep."

"April 4th. Met *him* disguised as a common workman, and carrying a sack full of things. I was so shocked I could not maintain my resolution; I said, Oh, Mr. Edward, what are you doing? He blushed a little, but told me he was going to sell some candlesticks and things of his making: and he should get a better price in that dress; all traders looked on a *gentleman* as a thing made to be pillaged. Then he told me he was going to turn them into a bonnet and a wreath; and his beautiful brown eyes sparkled with affection. What egotistical creatures *they* must be! I was quite overcome, and said oh why did he refuse our offer? did he hate me so very much that he would not even take his due from my hand? No, he said, nobody in our house is so unjust to you as to hate you; my sister honours you, and is very sorry you think ill of her: and, as for me, I love you; you know how I love you. I hid my face in my hands; and sobbed out, Oh, you must not; you must not; my poor father has one disobedient child already. He said softly, Don't cry, dear one; have a little patience; perhaps the clouds will clear: and, meantime, why think so ill of us? Consider, we are four in number, of different dispositions, yet all of

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one mind about Julia marrying Alfred. May we not be right; may we not know something we love you too well to tell you? His words and his rich manly voice were so soothing; I gave him just one hand while I still hid my burning face with the other; he kissed the hand I yielded him, and left me abruptly.

If Alfred should be right! I am staggered now; *he* puts it so much more convincingly."

"April 5th. A letter from Alfred, announcing his wedding by special license for the 11th.

Made no reply. What *could* I say?

Papa, on my reading it out, left his very breakfast half finished, and packed up his bag and rushed up to London. I caught a side view of his face; and I am miserable. Such a new, such a terrible expression: a vile expression! Heaven forgive me, it seemed the look of one who meditated a *crime*."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE spirit of dissension in Musgrove Cottage penetrated to the very kitchen. Old Betty sided with Alfred, and combated in her place the creed of the parlour; "Why, according to Miss, the young sparrows are bound never to fly out of the nest; or else have the Bible flung at 'em. She do go on about God's will: seems to me 'tis His will the world should be

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peopled by body and beast—which they are both his creatures—and, by the same token, if they don't marry they does wus. Certainly whilst a young man bides at home, it behoves him to be dutiful; but that ain't to say he *is* to bide at home for ever. Master Alfred's time is come to leave we, and be master in a house of his own, as his father done before him, which he forgets that now; he is grown to man's estate, and got his mother's money, and no more bound to our master than I be." She said too, that "parting blights more quarrels than it breeds:" and she constantly invited Peggy to speak up, and gainsay her. But Peggy was a young woman with white eyelashes, and given to looking down, and not to speaking up; she was always watching Mr Hardie in company, like a cat cream; and hovering about him when alone. Betty went so far as to accuse her of colloguing with him against Alfred, and of "setting her cap at master," which accusation elicited no direct reply, but stinging inuendoes hours after.

Now, if one looks into the thing, the elements of discord had attacked Albion Villa quite as powerfully as Musgrove Cottage; but had hitherto failed signally: the mutual affection of the Dodds was so complete, and no unprincipled person among them to split the good.

And, now that the wedding drew near, there was but one joyful heart within the walls, though the others were too kind and unselfish to throw cold

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water. Mrs. Dodd's own wedding had ended in a piteous separation, and now to part with her darling child and launch her on the uncertain waves of matrimony! She heaved many a sigh when alone: but as there were no bounds to her maternal love, so there were no exceptions to her politeness: over her aching heart she forced on a wedding face, subdued, but hopeful, for her daughter, as she would for any other young lady about to be married beneath her roof.

It wanted but six days, when one morning after breakfast the bereaved wife, and mother about to be deserted, addressed her son and Viceroy thus: "Edward, we *must* borrow fifty pounds."

"Fifty pounds? what for? who wants that?"

"Why *I* want it," said Mrs. Dodd, stoutly.

"Oh, if *you* want it—what to do, please?"

"Why to buy her wedding clothes, dear."

"I thought what her 'I' would come to," said Julia, reproachfully.

Edward shook his head, and said, "He who goes a borrowing goes a sorrowing."

"But she is not a he," objected Mrs. Dodd with the subtlety of a schoolman: "and who ever heard of a young lady being married without some things to be married *in?*"

"Well, I've heard Nudity is not the cheese on public occasions: but why not go dressed like a lady as she always does, only with white gloves; and be married without any bother and nonsense."

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"You talk like a boy," said Mrs. Dodd. "I could not bear it. My poor child!" and she cast a look of tenderest pity on the proposed victim. "Well, suppose we make the poor child the judge," suggested Edward. He then put it to Julia whether, under the circumstances, she would wish them to run in debt, buying her finery to wear for a day. "It was not fair to ask *her*," said Mrs. Dodd with a sigh.

Julia blushed and hesitated, and said she would be candid; and then stopped.

"Ugh!" ejaculated Edward. "This is a bad beginning. Girls' candour! now for a masterpiece of duplicity."

Julia inquired how he dared; and Mrs. Dodd said warmly that Julia was not like other people, she could be candid; had actually done it, more than once, within her recollection. The young lady justified the exception as follows: "If I was going to be married to myself, or to some gentleman I did not care for, I would not spend a shilling. But I am going to marry *him;* and so—oh, Edward, think of them saying 'What has he married? a dowdy: why she hadn't new things on to go to church with him: no bonnet, no wreath, no new white dress!' To mortify him the very first day of our——" The sentence remained unfinished, but two lovely eyes filled to the very brim without running over, and completed the sense, and did the Viceroy's business though a brother. "Why you dear little goose," said he: "of course I don't mean that. I have as

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good as got the things we must buy; and those are a new bonnet——"

"Ah!"

"A wreath of orange blossoms——'

"Oh you good boy!"

"Four pair of gloves: two white—one is safe to break—two dark; very dark: invisible green, or visible black; last the honeymoon. All the rest you must find in the house."

"What, fit her out with a parcel of old things? Can you be so cruel, so unreasonable, dear Edward?"

"Old things! Why, where is all your gorgeous attire from Oriental climes? I see the splendiferous articles arrive, and then they vanish for ever."

"Now, shawls and Indian muslins! pray what use are they to a bride?"

"Why what looks nicer than a white muslin dress?"

"Married in muslin? The very idea makes me shiver."

"Well, clap her on another petticoat."

"How can you be so childish? Muslin is not *the thing*."

"No more is running in debt."

He then suggested that a white shawl or two should be cut into a bridal dress. At this both ladies' fair throats opened on him with ridicule: cut fifty guinea shawls into ten-pound dresses; that was male economy; was it? Total; a wedding was a wedding: new things always *had* had to be bought for a wedding, and always would, in secula seculorum.

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"New things? Yes," said the pertinacious wretch; "but they need not be new-bought things. You ladies go and confound the world's eyes with your own in the drollest way: if Gorgeous Attire has lain long in your drawers, you fancy the world will detect on its glossy surface how long you had it, and gloated over it, and made it stale to your eye, before you could bring your mind to wear it. That is your delusion, that and the itch for going out shopping; oh, I'm down on you. Mamma dear, you open that gigantic wardrobe of yours; and I'll oil my hair, whitewash my mug (a little moan from Mrs. D.) and do the counterjumping business to the life; hand the things down to you, unrol 'em, grin, charge you 100 per cent over value, note them down in a penny memorandum-book, sing out 'Caesh! Caesh!' &c. &c.: and so we shall get all Julia wants, and go through the ritual of shopping without the substantial disgrace of running in debt."

Mrs. Dodd smiled admiringly, as ladies generally do at the sauciness of a young male; but proposed an amendment. She would open her wardrobe, and look out all the contents for Edward's inspection; and, if the mere sight of them did not convince him they were inappropriate to a bride, why then she would coincide with his views, and resign her own.

"All right!" said he. "That will take a jolly time, I know; so I'll go to my governor first for the bonnet and wreath."

Mrs. Dodd drew in at this last slang word; she

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had heard young gentlemen apply it to their fathers. Edward, she felt sure, would not so sully that sacred relation: still the word was obnoxious for its past offences; and she froze at it: "I have not the honour to know who the personage is you so describe," said she formally. Edward replied very carelessly that it was an upholsterer at the North end of the town.

"Ah, a tradesman you patronise."

"Humph? Well, yes, that is the word, mamma, haw! haw! I have been making the bloke a lot of oak candlesticks, and human heads with sparkling eyes, for walking-sticks, &c. And now I'll go and draw my — protégé's — blunt." The lady's hands were uplifted towards pitying Heaven with one impulse: the young workman grinned: "Soyons de notre siècle," said he, and departed whistling in the tenor clef. He had the mellowest whistle in England.

After a few minutes well spent in deploring the fall of her Oxonian, and gently denouncing his motto, and his century, its ways, and above all its words, Mrs. Dodd took Julia to her bedroom, and unlocked drawers and doors in her wardrobe; and straightway Sarah, who was hurriedly flogging the chairs with a duster, relaxed, and began to work on a cheval-glass as slowly as if she was drawing Nelson's lions at a thousand pounds the tail. Mrs. Dodd opened a drawer and took out three pieces of worked Indian muslin, a little discoloured by hoarding: "There, that must be bleached and make you some wrappers

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for the honeymoon, if the weather is at all fine; and petticoats to match;" next an envelope consisting of two foolscap sheets tacked: this, carefully undone upon the bed revealed a Brussels lace flounce and a veil: "It was my own," said Mrs. Dodd softly. "I saved it for you; see here is your name written on it seventeen years ago. I thought 'this dear little toddler will have wings some day, and then she will leave me.' But now I am almost afraid to let you wear it; it might bring you misfortune: suppose after years of wedded love you should be bereaved of ——" Mrs. Dodd choked, and Julia's arms were round her neck in a moment.

"I'll risk it," cried she impetuously. "If it but makes me as beloved as you are, I'll wear it come weal come woe! And then I shall feel it over me at the altar like my guardian angel's wings, my own sweet, darling, mamma. Oh what an idiot, what a wretch I am, to leave you at all."

This unfortunate, unexpected burst, interrupted business sadly. Mrs. Dodd sank down directly on the bed and wept; Julia cried over her, and Sarah plumped herself down in a chair and blubbered. But wedding flowers are generally well watered in the private apartments.

Patient Mrs. Dodd soon recovered herself: "This is childish of me. When I think that there are mothers who see their children go from the house corpses, not brides, I ought to be ashamed of myself. Come! à l'œuvre. Ah, here is something." And she produced

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a white China crape shawl. "Oh, how sweet," said Julia; "why have you never worn it?"

"Dear me, child, what use would things be to those I love, if I went and *wore* them?"

The next article she laid her hand on was a roll of white poplin, and drew an exclamation from Mrs. Dodd herself: "If I had not forgotten this, and it is the very thing. Your dear papa bought me this in London, and I remonstrated with him well for buying me such a delicate thing, only once wear. I kissed it and put it away, and forgot it. They *say* if you keep a thing seven years. It *is* just seven years since he gave it to me. Really the dear boy is a witch: this is your wedding dress, my precious precious." She unrolled a few yards on the bed to show it; and asked the gloating Sarah with a great appearance of consideration whether they were not detaining her from her occupations?

"Oh no, mum. This glass have got so dull; I'm just polishing of it a bit. I shan't be a minute now, mum."

From silver tissue paper Mrs. Dodd evolved a dress (unmade) of white crape embroidered in true-lovers'-knots of violet silk, and ears of wheat in gold. Then there was a scream at the glass, and Sarah seen in it with ten claws in the air very wide apart: she had slily turned the mirror and was devouring the reflexion of the finery, and this last Indian fabric overpowered her. Her exclamation was instantly followed by much polishing; but Mrs. Dodd replied

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to it after the manner of her sex: "Well, it *is* lovely," said she to Julia: "but where is the one with beetle wings? Oh here."

"Real beetles' wings, mamma?" inquired Julia.

"Yes, love."

"So they are, and how wicked! and what a lovely green! I will never wear them: they are prismatic: now, if ever I am to be a Christian, I had better begin: everything *has* a beginning. Oh vanity of women, you stick at nothing. A thousand innocent lives stolen to make one dress!" And she put one hand before her eyes, and with the other ordered the dress back into the wardrobe with genuine agitation.

"My dear, what expressions! And you need not wear it; indeed neither of them is fit for that purpose. But you *must* have a pretty thing or two about you. I have hoarded these a good many years; now it is your turn to have them by you. And let me see: you want a travelling cloak, but the dear boy will not let us; so choose a warm shawl."

A rich but modest one was soon found, and Julia tried it on, arching her supple neck, and looking down over her shoulder to see the effect behind, in which attitude oh for an immortal brush to paint her, or anything half as bright, supple, graceful, and every inch a woman. At this moment Mrs. Dodd threw a lovely blue Indian shawl on the bed, galvanising Sarah so that up went her hands again, and the door opened softly and a handsome head in a

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paper cap peeped on the scene, inquiring with mock timidity "May 'The British Workman' come in?" He was invited warmly; Julia whipped his cap off, and tore it in two, reddening, and Mrs. Dodd, intending to compliment his foresight, showed him the bed laden with the treasures they had disinterred from vanity's mahogany tomb.

"Well, mother," said he, "you were right, and I was wrong: they are inappropriate enough, the whole lot."

The ladies looked at one another, and Sarah permitted herself a species of snort.

"Do we want Sarah?" he asked quietly. She retired bridling.

"Inappropriate?" exclaimed Mrs. Dodd. "There is nothing here unfit for a bride's trousseau."

"Good Heavens! Would you trick her out like a Princess?"

"We must. We are too poor to dress her like a lady."

"Cinderella; at your service," observed Julia complacently, and pirouetted before him in her new shawl.

Ideas rejected peremptorily at the time often rankle, and bear fruit by-and-by. Mrs. Dodd took up the blue shawl, and said she would make Julia a peignoir of it; and the border, being narrowish, would do for the bottom. "That was a good notion of yours, darling," said she, bestowing a sweet smile on Edward. He grunted. Then she took out a bundle of

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lace: "Oh for pity's sake no more," cried the "British Workman."

"Now, dearest, you have interfered once in feminine affairs, and we submitted. But, if you say another word, I will trim her poplin with Honiton two feet deep."

"Quarter! quarter!" cried Edward. "I'm dumb; grant me but this; have nothing made up for her out of the house: you know there is no dressmaker in Barkington can cut like you: and then that will put some limit to our inconsistency." Mrs. Dodd agreed; but she must have a woman in to sew.

Edward grunted at this, and said: "I wish I could turn you these gowns with my lathe; what a deal of time and bother it would save. However, if you want any stuffing, come to me; I'll lend you lots of shavings; make the silk rustle. Oh here is my governor's contribution." And he produced 7*l.* 10*s.*

"Now, look there," said Julia sorrowfully, "it is money. And I thought you were going to bring me the very bonnet yourself. Then I should have valued it."

"Oh yes," replied the young gentleman ironically; "can I choose a bonnet to satisfy such swells as you and mamma? I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll go with you and *look* as wise as Solomon, all the time you are choosing it."

"A capital plan," said Julia.

Edward then shook his fist at the finery: and retired to work again for his governor: "Flowers,"

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he observed, "are indispensable, at a wedding breakfast; I hear too it is considered the right cheese to add something in the shape of grub." Exit whistling in the tenor clef; and keeping their hearts up, like a man.

So now there were two workshops in Albion Villa; Ned's study, as he called it, and the drawing-room: in the former shavings flew, and settled at their ease, and the whirr of the lathe slept not; the latter was all patterns, tapes, hooks and eyes, whalebone, cuttings of muslin poplin and paper; clouds of lining-muslin, snakes of piping; skeins, shreds; and the floor literally sown with pins, escaped from the fingers of the fair, those taper fingers so typical of the minds of their owners: for they have softness, suppleness, nimbleness, adroitness, and "a plentiful lack" of tenacity.

The days passed in hard work, and the evenings in wooing, never sweeter than when it has been so earned: and at last came the wedding-eve. Dr. Sampson, who was to give the bride away, arrived just before dinner-time: the party, including Alfred, sat down to a charming little dinner; they ate beetles' wings, and drank Indian muslin fifteen years in the wood. For the lathe and the chisel proved insufficient, and Julia having really denied herself, as an aspirant to Christianity, that assassin's robe, Mrs. Dodd sold it under the rose to a fat old dowager—for whom nothing was too fine—and so kept up appearances.

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Julia and Alfred were profoundly happy at bottom; yet their union was attended with too many drawbacks for boisterous gaiety, and Alfred, up to this time, had shown a seriousness and sobriety of bliss, that won Mrs. Dodd's gratitude: it was the demeanour of a delicate mind; it became his own position, at odds with his own flesh and blood for Julia's sake; it became him as the son-in-law of a poor woman so lately bereaved of her husband, and reduced to poverty by one bearing the name of Hardie.

But now Dr. Sampson introduced a gayer element. He had seen a great deal of Life; *i.e.* of death and trouble. This had not hardened him, but, encountering a sturdy, valiant, self-protecting nature, had made him terribly tough and elastic; it was now his way never to go forward or backward a single step after sorrow. He seldom mentioned a dead friend or relation; and, if others forced the dreary topic on him, they could never hold him to it; he was away directly to something pleasant or useful, like a grasshopper skipping off a grave into the green grass. He had felt keenly about David while there was anything to be done: but now his poor friend was in a madhouse, thanks to the lancet; and there was an end of *him*. Thinking about him would do him no good. The present only is irresistible; past and future ills the mind can bar out by a resolute effort. The bride will very likely die of her first child! Well then, forget that just now. Her father is in an

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asylum! well then, don't remember him at the wrong time: there sit female beauty and virtue ready to wed manly wit and comeliness, seated opposite; see their sweet stolen glances; a few hours only between them and wedded rapture: and I'm here to give the lovely virgin away: fill the bumper high! dum vivimus vivamus. In this glorious spirit he rattled on, and soon drew the young people out, and silvery peals of laughter rang round the genial board.

This jarred on Mrs. Dodd. She bore it in silence some time; but, with the grief it revived and sharpened by contrast, and the polite effort to hide her distress, found herself becoming hysterical: then she made the usual signal to Julia, and beat an early retreat. She left Julia in the drawing-room, and went and locked herself in her own room. "Oh, how can they be so *cruel* as to laugh and giggle in my David's house!" She wept sadly, and for the first time felt herself quite lonely in the world: for what companionship between the gay and the sad-hearted? Poor thing, she lived to reproach herself even with this, the nearest approach she ever made to selfishness.

Ere long she crept into Julia's room and humbly busied herself packing her trunks for the wedding tour. The tears fell fast on her white hands.

She would not have been left alone a minute if Julia's mind had not been occupied just then with an affectionate and seemly anxiety: she earnestly desired to reconcile her Alfred and his sister before the

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wedding; and she sat in the drawing-room thinking whether it could be done, and how.

At last she sat down blushing and wrote a little note, and rang the bell for Sarah, and sent it courageously into the dining-room.

Sarah very prudently listened at the keyhole before entering; for she said to herself, "If they are talking free, I shan't go in till it's over."

The persons so generously suspected were discussing a parchment Alfred had produced, and wanted signed: "You are our trustee, my boy," said he to Edward: "so just write your name here, and mine comes here, and the witnesses there: the Doctor and Sarah will do. Send for a pen."

"Let's read it first, please."

"Read it! What for?"

"Catch me signing a paper without reading it, my boy."

"What, can't you trust me?" inquired Alfred, hurt.

"Oh yes. And can't you trust me?"

"There's a question: why I have appointed you my Trusty in the Deed; he, he."

"Well then trust me without my signing, and I'll trust you without reading."

Sampson laughed at this retort, and Alfred reddened; he did not want the Deed read. But, while he hesitated, Sarah came in with Julia's note, asking him to come to her for a minute. This sweet summons made him indifferent to prosaic things. "Well,

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read away," said he: "one comfort, you will be no wiser."

"What is it in Latin?" asked Edward, with a wry face.

"No such luck. Deeds used to be in Latin; but Latin could not be made obscure enough. So now Dark Deeds are written in an unknown tongue called 'Lawyerish,' where the sense is 'as one grain of wheat in two bushels of chaff;' pick it out if you can."

"Whatever man has done man may do," said Dr. Sampson stoutly. "You have rid it, and yet understood it: so why mayn't we, ye monster o' conceit?"

"Read it?" said Alfred. "I never read it: would not read it for a great deal of money. The moment I saw what a senseless rigmarole it was, I flung it down and insisted on the battologieal author furnishing me with an English translation. He complied: the crib occupies just twenty lines; the original three folio pages, as you see. That crib, gentlemen," added he severely, "is now in my waistcoat pocket; and you shall never see it—for your impudence. No, seat yourselves by that pool of parchment (sedet eternumque sedebit, &c.) and fish for Lawyer Crawford's ideas, rari nantes in gurgite vasto." And with this he flew up-stairs on the wings of love. Julia met him in the middle of the room all in a flutter: "It is to ask you a favour. I am unhappy—about one thing."

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She then leaned one hand softly on his shoulder, and curving her lovely supple neck looked round into his face and watched it as she preferred her petition: "It is about Jane and you. I cannot bear to part you two in this way: only think, six days you have not spoken; and I am the cause."

"Not the only cause, love."

"I don't know, darling. But it is very cruel. I have got my dear mother and Edward; you have nobody—but Me. Alfred," said she with gentle impetuosity, "now is the time; your papa is away."

"Oh, is he?" said Alfred, carelessly.

"Yes. Sarah says Betty says he is gone to Uncle Thomas. So I know you won't refuse me, my own Alfred: it is to go to your sister this minute and make it up."

"What, and leave you?" objected Alfred ruefully.

"No, no; you are with the gentlemen, you know: you are not here, *in reality*, till tea. Make them an excuse: say the truth; say it is Me: and come back to me with good news."

He consented on these terms.

Then she armed him with advice: "You go to make peace; it is our last chance; now remember, you must be very generous, very sweet tempered. Guard against your impetuosity. Do take warning by me; see how impetuous I am. And then, you know, after all, she is only a lady, and a great creature like you ought not to be ruffled by anything so small as a lady's tongue: the idea! And, dearest,

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don't go trusting to your logic, but *do* descend to the arts of persuasion, because they are far more convincing somehow: please try them."

"Yes. Enumerate them."

"Why, kissing, and coaxing, and—don't ask *me*."

"Will you bestow a specimen of those arts on me, if I succeed?"

"Try me," said she: and looked him earnestly in the face; but lowered her long lashes slowly and shily, as she realized to what her Impetuosity was pledging itself.

Alfred got his hat and ran to Musgrove Cottage.

A man stepped out of the shadow of a hedge opposite Albion Villa, and followed him, keeping in shadow as much as possible.

The door of Musgrove Cottage was opened to him by old Betty with a joyful start: "Mr. Alfred, I *de*clare! Come in; there's only me and Miss. Master is in Yorkshire, and that there crocodile, Peggy, she is turned away—for sauce—and a good riddance of bad rubbish; Miss is in the parlour."

She ushered him triumphantly in. Jane was seated reading: she dropped her book, and ran and kissed him with a cry of joy. So warm a reception surprised him agreeably, and simplified his task. He told her he was come to try and make it up with her before the wedding: "We lose your presence, dear Jenny," said he, "and that is a great

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grief to us, valuing you as we do: don't refuse us your good wishes to-morrow."

"Dearest Alfred," said she, "can you think it? I pray for you day and night. And I have begun to blame myself for being so sure you were in the wrong and poor papa faultless. What you sent me half in jest, I take in earnest. 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.'"

"Why, Jenny," said Alfred, "how red your eyes are."

At this observation the young saint laid her head on her brother's shoulder and had a good cry like any other girl. When she recovered a little she told him, yes, she had been very unhappy: that he had always been a dear good brother to her, and the only one she had; and that it cut her to the heart not to be at his wedding; it seemed so unkind.

Alfred set her on his knee,—she had more soul than body,—and kissed her and comforted her: and, in this happy revival of natural affection, his heart opened, he was off his guard, and told her all: gave her the several proofs their father had got the 14,000*l*. Jane, arrested by the skill and logical clearness with which he marshalled the proofs, listened in silence; and presently a keen shudder ran through her frame, and reminded him he was setting a daughter against her father.

"There," said he, "I always said I would never tell you, and now I've done it. Well, at least you will see with what consideration, and unheard-of

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leniency, the Dodds for our sake are treating Mr. Richard Hardie. Just compare their conduct to him with his to them. And which is most to his advantage? that I should marry Julia, and give Mrs. Dodd the life interest in my ten thousand pounds, to balance his dishonesty, or for him to be indicted as a thief? Ned Dodd told us plainly he would have set the police on him, had any other but his son been the informant."

"Did *he* say that? Oh, Alfred, this is a miserable world."

"I can't see that: it is the jolliest world in the world: everything is bright and lovely, and everybody is happy except a few sick people, and a few peevish ones that run to meet trouble; to-morrow I marry my sweet Julia; Richard Hardie will find we two don't molest him, nor trouble our heads about him; he will get used to us; and one fine day we shall say to him, 'Now, we know all about the 14,000*l.*: just leave it by will to dear Jenny, and let my friend Dodd marry her, and you can enjoy it unmolested for your lifetime.' He will consent: and you will marry Ned, and then you'll find the world has been wickedly slandered by dishonest men and dismal dogs."

In this strain he continued till he made her blush a good deal and smile a little; a sad smile.

But at last she said, "If I was sure all this is true, I think I should go—with a heavy heart—to your wedding. If I don't, the best part of me will be

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there, my prayers, and my warm, warm wishes for you both. Kiss her for me, and tell her so; and that I hope we shall meet round His throne soon, if we cannot meet at His altar to-morrow."

Brother and sister then kissed one another affectionately; and Alfred ran back like the wind to Albion Cottage. Julia was not in the drawing-room, and some coolish tea was. After waiting half an hour he got impatient, and sent Sarah to say he had a message for her. Sarah went upstairs to Mrs. Dodd's room, and was instantly absorbed. After waiting again a long time, Alfred persuaded Edward to try his luck. Edward went up to Mrs. Dodd's room, and was absorbed.

The wedding dress was being solemnly tried on. A clean linen sheet was on the floor, and the bride stood on it, receiving the last touches of the milliner's art. With this and her white poplin and lace veil she seemed framed in white, and her cheeks bloomed so, and her eyes beamed, with excitement and innocent vanity, that altogether she was supernaturally lovely.

Once enter the room enchanted by this snow clad rose, and—Vestigia nulla retrorsum.

However Edward escaped at last, and told Alfred what was on foot, and drew a picture of the Bride with white above and white below.

"Oh, let me see her," implored the lover.

Edward must ask mamma about that. He did, and mamma said "Certainly not; the last person in

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the world that shall see her in her wedding dress." But she should come down to him in half an hour. It seemed a very long half-hour. However, by way of compensation, he was alone when she did come. "Good news?" she asked, eagerly.

"Capital: we are the best of friends. Why she is half inclined to *come*."

"Then—oh how good you are: oh, how I love you."

And she flung a tender arm round his neck, like a young goddess making love; and her sweet face came so near his, he had only to stoop a little, and their lips met in a long blissful kiss.

That kiss was an era in her life. Innocence itself, she had put up her delicious lips to her lover in pure, though earnest affection; but the male fire with which his met them, made her blush as well as thrill, and she drew back a little, abashed and half scared, and nestled on his shoulder, hiding a face that grew redder and redder.

He bent his graceful head, and murmured down to her, "Are you afraid of me, sweetest?"

"Oh no, no! Yes, a little: I don't know. I was afraid I had made too free with my Treasure; you don't quite belong to me yet, you know."

"Oh yes, I do: and, what is more, you belong to me. Don't you, sweet rebel?"

"Ah, that I do, heart and soul, my own, own, own."

A few more soft delicious murmurs, and then Julia

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was summoned to more rites of vanity, and the lovers parted with tender reluctance for those few hours.

Alfred went home to his lodgings.

He had not been there above ten minutes, when he came out hastily, and walked quickly to the "White Lion," the principal inn in Barkington. He went into the stable-yard, and said a few words to the ostler: then returned to his lodgings.

The man followed him at a distance, from Albion Terrace; watched him home; dogged him to the "White Lion;" and, by-and-by, entered the yard and offered the ostler a glass of ale at the tap.

At Albion Villa they were working on Julia's dresses till past midnight: and then Mrs. Dodd insisted on her going to bed. She obeyed; but when the house was all quiet, came stealing out to her mother, and begged to sleep with her: the sad mother strained her in a tearful embrace: and so they passed the night; clinging to one another more as the parting drew near.

Edward arranged the wedding breakfast for after the ceremony; and sent the ladies up a cup of coffee, and a bit of toast, apiece; they could hardly find appetite even for this; or indeed time; there was so much still to do.

At ten o'clock Julia was still in the height of dressing, delayed by contretemps upon contretemps. Sarah and her sister did her hair up too loose, and, being a glorious mass, it threatened all to come

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down; and, meantime, a hair-pin quietly but persistently bored her cream-white poll.

"Oh, run for mamma!"

Mamma came half dressed, had the hair all down again, and did it up with adroit and loving hand, and put on the orange wreath, kissed her admiringly, and retired to her own toilet; and the girls began to lace the bride's body.

Bump came Edward's foot against the door, making them all shriek.

"Now I don't want to hurry you; but Dr. Sampson is come."

The handmaids, flustered, tried to go faster; and, when the work was done, Julia took her little hand-glass and inspected her back: "Oh," she screamed, "I am crooked. There, go for mamma!"

Mamma soon came, and the poor bride held out imploring hands: "I'm all awry; I'm as crooked as a ram's horn."

"La, miss," said Sarah, "it's only behind; nobody will notice it."

"How can they help it? Mamma! *am* I deformed?"

Mrs. Dodd smiled superior and bade her be calm: "It is the lacing, dear. No, Sarah, it is no use your *pulling* it; all the pulling in the world will not straighten it. I thought so: you have missed the second top hole."

Julia's little foot began to beat a tattoo on the floor: "There is not a soul in the house but you can

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do the simplest thing. Eyes and no eyes! Fingers and no fingers! I never *did*."

"Hush, love, we all do our best."

"Oh, I am sure of that; poor things."

"*Nobody* can lace you if you fidget about, love," objected Mrs. Dodd.

(Bump!) "Now I don't want to hurry any man's cattle: but the bridesmaids are come."

"Oh dear, I shall never be ready in time," said Julia; and the tattoo recommenced.

"Plenty of time, love," said Mrs. Dodd, quietly lacing: "not half-past ten yet. Sarah, go and see if the bridegroom has arrived."

Sarah returned with the reassuring tidings that the bridegroom had not yet arrived; though the carriages had.

"Oh, thank Heaven *he* is not come," said Julia. "If I keep him waiting to-day, he might say—"Oho!'"

Under dread of a comment so significant, she was ready at last, and said majestically he might come now whenever he liked.

Meantime, down stairs, an uneasiness of the opposite kind was growing. Ten minutes past the appointed time, and the bridegroom not there. So while Julia, now full dressed, and easy in her mind, was directing Sarah's sister to lay out her plain travelling dress, bonnet and gloves, on the bed, Mrs. Dodd was summoned down stairs: she came down with Julia's white gloves in her hand and a

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needle and thread, the button sewed on by trade's fair hand having flown at the first strain. Edward met her on the stairs: "What had we better do, mother?" said he, sotto voce: "there must be some mistake. Can you remember? Wasn't he to call for me on the way to the church?"

"I really do not know," said Mrs. Dodd. "Is he at the church, do you think?"

"No, no, either he was to call for me, here, or I for him. I'll go to the church, though: it is only a step."

He ran off, and in a little more than five minutes came into the drawing-room.

"No, he is not there. I must go to his lodgings. Confound him, he has got reading Aristotle, I suppose."

This passed before the whole party, Julia excepted.

Sampson looked at his watch, and said he could conduct the ladies to the church while Edward went for Alfred. "Division of labour," said he, gallantly, "and mine the delightful half."

Mrs. Dodd demurred to the plan. She was for waiting quietly in one place.

"Well, but," said Edward, "we may overdo that; here it is a quarter-past eleven, and you know they can't be married after twelve. No, I really think you had better all go with the doctor; I dare say we shall be there as soon as you will."

This was agreed on after some discussion: Edward, however, to provide against all contingencies, begged

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Sampson not to wait for him should Alfred reach the church by some other road: "I'm only groomsman, you know," said he. He ran off at a racing pace. The bride was then summoned, admired, and handed into one carriage with her two bridesmaids, Miss Bosanquet and Miss Darton; Sampson and Mrs. Dodd went in the other; and by half-past eleven they were all safe in the church.

A good many people high and low were about the door, and in the pews, waiting to see the beautiful Miss Dodd married to the son of a personage once so popular as Mr. Hardie: it had even transpired that Mr. Hardie disapproved the match. They had been waiting a long time, and were beginning to wonder what was the matter, when, at last, the bride's party walked up the aisle with a bright April sun shining on them through the broad old windows. The bride's rare beauty, and stag-like carriage of her head imperial in its loveliness and orange wreath, drew a hum of admiration.

The party stood a minute or two at the east end of the church, and then the clergyman came out and invited them into the vestry.

Their reappearance was eagerly expected; in silence at first, but presently in loud and multitudinous whispers.

At this moment a young lady with almost perfect features, and sylph-like figure, modestly dressed in dove-coloured silk, but with a new chip bonnet and white gloves, entered a pew near the west door, and

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said a little prayer; then proceeded up the aisle, and exchanged a word with the clerk, then into the vestry.

"Cheep! cheep! cheep!" went fifty female tongues, and the arrival of the bridegroom's sister became public news.

The bride welcomed her in the vestry with a sweet guttural of surprise and delight, and they kissed one another like little tigers.

"Oh my darling Jane, how kind of you! have I got you back to make my happiness complete?"

Now none of her own party had thought it wise to tell Julia there was any hitch: but Miss Hardie blurted out naturally enough: "But where's Alfred?"

"I don't know, dear," said Julia, innocently. "Are not he and Edward in another part of the church? I thought we were waiting till twelve o'clock, perhaps. Mamma dear, you know everything; I suppose this is all right?"

Then, looking round at her friends' faces, she saw in a moment that it was all wrong. Sampson's, in particular, was burning with manly indignation, and even her mother's discomposed, and trying to smile.

When the innocent saw this, she suspected her beloved was treating her cavalierly, and her poor little mouth began to work, and she had much ado not to whimper.

Mrs. Dodd, to encourage her, told her not to be put out: it had been arranged all along that Edward should go for him: "Unfortunately we had an im-

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pression it was the other way: but now Edward is gone to his lodgings."

"No, mamma," said Julia; "Alfred was to call for Edward; because our house was on the way."

"Are you sure, my child?" asked Mrs. Dodd, very gravely.

"Oh yes, mamma," said Julia, beginning to tremble: "at a quarter before eleven: I heard them settle it."

The matter was terribly serious now; indeed it began to look hopeless. Weather overclouded; raindrops falling; and hard upon twelve o'clock.

They all looked at one another in despair.

Suddenly there was a loud, long, buzzing heard outside, and the house of God turned into a gossiping fair. "Talk of money changers," said Satan that day, "give *me* the exchangers of small talk."

"Thank Heaven they are come," said Mrs. Dodd. But, having thus relieved her mind, she drew herself up and prepared a freezing reception for the defaulter.

A whisper reached their excited ears: "It is young Mr. Dodd!" and next moment Edward came into the vestry—alone: the sight of him was enough; his brow wet with perspiration, his face black and white with bitter wrath.

"Come home, *my* people," he said, sternly: "there will be no wedding here to-day."

The bridesmaids cackled questions at him; he turned his back on them.

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Mrs. Dodd knew her son's face too well to waste inquiries. "Give me my child!" she cried, in such a burst of mother's anguish long restrained, that even the insult to the bride was forgotten for one moment, till she was seen tottering into her mother's arms and cringing and trying to hide bodily in her: "Oh, throw a shawl over me," she moaned: "hide all this."

Well, they all did what they could; Jane hung round her neck and sobbed, and said, "I've a sister now, and no brother." The bridesmaids cried. The young curate ran and got the fly to the vestry-door: "Get into it," he said, "and you will at least escape the curious crowd."

"God bless you, Mr. Hurd," said Edward, half choked. He hurried the insulted bride and her mother in; Julia huddled and shrank into a corner under Mrs. Dodd's shawl; Mrs. Dodd had all the blinds down in a moment; and they went home as from a funeral.

Ay, and a funeral it was; for the sweetest girl in England buried her hopes, her laugh, her May of youth, in that church that day.

When she got to Albion Villa, she cast a wild look all around for fear she should be seen in her wedding clothes; and darted moaning into the house.

Sarah met her in the hall, smirking; and saying, "Wish you j——"

The poor bride screamed fearfully at the mocking words, and cut the conventional phrase in two as

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with a razor; then fled to her own room, and tore off her wreath, her veil, her pearls, and had already strewed the room, when Mrs. Dodd, with a foot quickened by affection, burst in and caught her half fainting, and laid her weary as old age, and cold as a stone, upon her mother's bosom, and rocked her as in the days of happy childhood never to return, and bedewed the pale face with her own tears.

Sampson took the bridesmaids each to her residence, on purpose to leave Edward free. He came home, washed his face, and, sick at heart, but more master of himself, knocked timidly at Julia's door.

"Come in, *my son*," said a broken voice.

He crept in; and saw a sorry sight. The travelling dress and bonnet were waiting still on the bed; the bridal wreath and veil lay on the floor; and so did half the necklace, and the rest of the pearls all about the floor; and Julia, with all her hair loose and hanging below her waist, lay faintly quivering in her mother's arms.

Edward stood and looked, and groaned.

Mrs. Dodd whispered to him over Julia: "Not a tear! not a tear!"

"Dead, or false?" moaned the girl: "dead, or false? oh, that I could believe he was false: no, no, he is dead: dead."

Mrs. Dodd whispered again over her girl.

"Tell her something: oh, give me tears for her—the world for one tear!"

"What shall I say?" gasped Edward.

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"Tell her the truth, and trust to God, whose child she is."

Edward knelt on the floor and took her hand:

"My poor little Ju," he said, in a voice broken with pity and emotion, "would you rather have him dead, or false to you?"

"Why false, a thousand times. It's Edward. Bless your sweet face, my own, own brother; tell me he is false, and not come to deadly harm."

"You shall judge for yourself," he groaned; "I went to his lodgings. He had left the town. The woman told me a letter came for him last night. A letter in—a female hand. The scoundrel came in from us; got this letter; packed up his things directly; paid his lodging; and went off in a two-horse fly at eight o'clock in the morning."

CHAPTER XV.

At these plain proofs of Alfred's infidelity, Julia's sweet throat began to swell hysterically, and then her bosom to heave and pant: and, after a piteous struggle, came a passion of sobs and tears so wild, so heartbroken, that Edward blamed himself bitterly for telling her.

But Mrs. Dodd sobbed "No, no, I would rather have her so; only leave her with me now: bless you, darling: leave us quickly."

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She rocked and nursed her deserted child hours and hours; and so the miserable day crawled to its close.

Down stairs the house looked strange and gloomy: she, who had brightened it all, was darkened herself. The wedding breakfast and flowers remained in bitter mockery. Sarah cleared half the table, and Sampson and Edward dined in moody silence.

Presently Sampson's eye fell upon the Deed: it lay on a small table with a pen beside it, to sign on their return from church.

Sampson got hold of it and buried himself in the verbiage like a pearl-fisher diving. He came up again with a discovery. In spite of its feebleness, verbosity, obscurity, and idiotic way of expressing itself, the Deed managed to convey to David and Mrs. Dodd a life interest in nine thousand five hundred pounds, with reversion to Julia and the children of the projected marriage. Sampson and Edward put their heads over this, and it puzzled them. "Why, man," said Sampson, "if the puppy had signed this last night, he would be a beggar now."

"Ay," said Edward, "but after all he did not sign it."

"Nay, but that was your fault, not his; the lad was keen to sign."

"That is true: and perhaps if we had pinned him to this, last night, he would not have dared insult my sister to-day."

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Sampson changed the subject by inquiring suddenly which way he was gone.

"Curse him, I don't know; and don't care. Go where he will I shall meet him again some day; and then——" Edward spoke almost in a whisper, but a certain grinding of his white teeth and flashing of his lion eyes made the incomplete sentence very expressive.

"What ninnies you young men are," said the Doctor; "even you, that I dub 'my fathom o' good sense:' just finish your dinner, and come with me."

"No, Doctor; I'm off my feed for once: if you had been up-stairs and seen my poor sister! hang the grub; it turns my stomach." And he shoved his plate away, and leaned over the back of his chair.

Sampson made him drink a glass of wine, and then they got up from the half-finished meal and went hurriedly to Alfred's lodgings, the Doctor, though sixty, rushing along with all the fire and buoyancy of early youth.

They found the landlady surrounded by gossips curious as themselves, and longing to chatter, but no materials. The one new fact they elicited was that the vehicle was a White Lion fly, for she knew the young man by the cast in his eye. "Come away," shouted the Doctor, unceremoniously, and in two minutes they were in the yard of the White Lion.

Sampson called the ostler: out came a hard-fea-

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tured man with a strong squint. Sampson concluded this was his man, and said roughly: "Where did you drive young Hardie this morning?"

He seemed rather taken aback by this abrupt question; but reflected and slapped his thigh: "Why that is the party from Mill Street."

"Yes."

"Druv him to Silverton station, sir: and wasn't long about it, either; gent was in a hurry."

"What train did he go by?"

"Well, I don't know, sir; I left him at the station."

"Well, then where did he take his ticket for? Where did he tell the porter he was going? Think now, and I'll give y' a sovereign."

The ostler scratched his head, and seemed at first inclined to guess for the sovereign, but at last said: "I should only be robbing you, gents; ye see he paid the fly then and there, and gave me a crown: and I druv away directly."

On this they gave him a shilling and left him. But on leaving the yard, Edward said: "Doctor, I don't like that fellow's looks: let us try the landlord." They went into the bar and made similar inquiries. The landlord was out, the mistress knew nothing about it, but took a book out of a drawer, and turned over the leaves. She read out an entry to this effect:

"Pair horse fly to Silverton: take up in Mill Street at eight o'clock. Is that it, sir?" Sampson

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assented; but Edward told her the ostler said it was Silverton station.

"No: it is Silverton in the book, sir. Well, you see it is all one to us; the station is further than the town, but we charge seven miles whichever 'tis."

Bradshaw, inspected then and there, sought in vain to conceal that four trains reach Silverton from different points between 8·50 and 9·25, A.M.

The friends retired with this scanty information; Alfred could hardly have gone to London: for there was a train up from Barkington itself at 8·30. But he might have gone to almost any other part of the island, or out of it for that matter. Sampson fell into a brown study.

After a long silence, which Edward was too sad to break, he said thoughtfully: "Bring science to bear on this hotch potch. Facks are never really opposed to facks; they onnly seem to be: and the true solution is the one which riconciles all the facks: f'r instance the chronothairmal Therey riconciles all th' undisputed facks in midicine. So now sairch for a solution to riconcile the Deed with the puppy levanting."

Edward searched, but could find none; and said so.

"Can't you?" said Sampson; "then I'll give you a couple. Say he is touched in the upper story for one."

"What do you mean? mad?"

"Oh: there are degrees of Phrinzy. Here is th'

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inconsistency of conduct that marks a disturbance of the reason: and, to tell the truth, I once knew a young fellow that played this very prank at a wedding, and the nixt thing we hard, my lorrd was in Bedlam."

Edward shook his head: "It is the villain's heart, not his brain."

Sampson then offered another solution, in which he owned he had more confidence:

"He has been courting some other wumman first: she declined, or made believe; but, when she found he had the spirit to go and marry an innocent girl, then the jade wrote to him and yielded. It's a married one, likely. I've known women go further for hatred of a wumman than they would for love of a man: and here was a temptation! to snap a lover off th' altar, and insult a rival, all at one blow. He meant to marry; he meant to sign that deed: ay and, at his age, even if he had signed it, he would have gone off at passion's call, and beggared himself. What enrages me is that we didn't let him sign it, and so nail the young rascal's money."

"Curse his money," said Edward, "and him too. Wait till I can lay my hand on him; I'll break every bone in his skin."

"And I'll help you."

In the morning, Mrs. Dodd left Julia for a few minutes expressly to ask Sampson's advice. After Alfred's conduct she was free, and fully determined, to defend herself and family against spoliation by

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any means in her power; so she now showed the doctor David's letter about the 14,000*l.*; and the empty pocket-book; and put together the disjointed evidence of Julia, Alfred, and circumstances, in one neat and luminous statement: Sampson was greatly struck with the revelation: he jumped off his chair and marched about excited; said truth was stranger than fiction, and this was a manifest swindle: then he surprised Mrs. Dodd in her turn by assuming that old Hardie was at the bottom of yesterday's business. Neither Edward nor his mother could see that, and said so: his reply was characteristic: "Of course you can't; you are Anglosaxins; th' Anglosaxins are good at drawing distinctions; but they can't gineralise. I'm a Celt, and gineralise—as a duck swims. I discovered th' unity of all disease: it would be odd if I could not trace the manifform iniquities you suffer to their one source."

"But what is the connecting link?" asked Mrs. Dodd, still incredulous.

"Why Richard Hardie's interest."

"Well, but the letter?" objected Edward.

"There goes th' Anglosaxin again," remonstrated Sampson: "puzzling his head over petty details; and they are perhaps mere blinds thrown out by th' enemy. Put this and that together: Hardie senior always averse to this marriage; Hardie senior wanting to keep 14,000*l.* of yours: if his son, who knows of the fraud, became your mother's son, the swindle would be hourly in danger (no connexion? y' unhappy

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Anglosaxins; why the two things are interwoven). And so young Hardie is got out of the way: old Hardie's doing, or I'm a Dutchman."

This reasoning still appeared forced and fanciful to Edward; but it began to make some little impression on Mrs. Dodd, and encouraged her to own that her poor daughter suspected foul play.

"Well, that is possible too; whativer tempted man has done, tempted man will do: but more likely he has bribed Jezebel to write and catch the goose by the heart. Gintlemen. I'm a bit of a physiognomist: look at old Hardie's lines; his cords I might say; and deeper every time I see him; sirs, I've an eye like a hawk; there's an awful weight on that man's mind. Looksee! I'll just send a small trifle of a detective down to watch his game, and pump his people: and, as soon as it is safe, we'll seize the old bird, and, once he is trapped, the young one will reappear like magic: th' old one will disgorge; we'll just compound the felony—been an old friend—and recover the cash."

A fine sketch; but Edward thought it desperately wild, and Mrs. Dodd preferred employing a respectable attorney to try and obtain justice in the regular way. Sampson laughed at her; what was the use of attacking in the regular way an irregular genius like old Hardie? "Attorneys are too humdrum for such a job," said he; "they start with a civil letter putting a rogue on his guard; they proceed t' a writ, and then he digs a hole in another county and buries

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the booty; or sails t' Australia with it. N'list'me; I'm an old friend, and an insane lover of justice—I say insane, because my passion is not returned, or the jade wouldn't keep out of my way so all these years—you leave all this to me."

"Stop a minute," said Edward; "you must not go compromising us: and we have got no money to pay for luxuries like detectives."

"I won't compromise any one of you: and my detective shan't cost y' a penny."

"Ah, my dear friend," said Mrs. Dodd, "the fact is, you do not know all the difficulties that beset us. Tell him, Edward. Well then, let *me*. The poor boy is attached to this gentleman's daughter, whom you propose to treat like a felon: and he is too good a son and too good a friend for me to—what, what, shall I do?"

Edward coloured up to the eyes: "Who told you that, mother?" said he. "Well, yes I do love her, and I'm not ashamed of it. Doctor," said the poor fellow after a while, "I see now I am not quite the person to advise my mother in this matter. I consent to leave it in your hands."

And, in pursuance of this resolution, he retired to his study.

"There's a domnable combination," said Sampson, drily. "Truth is sairtainly more wonderful than feckshin. Here's my fathom o' good sense in love with a wax doll, and her brother jilting his sister, and her father pillaging his mother. It *beats* hotch potch."

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Mrs. Dodd denied the wax doll: but owned Miss Hardie was open to vast objections: "An estimable young lady; but so odd; she is one of these uneasy-minded Christians that have sprung up: a religious egotist, and malade imaginaire, eternally feeling her own spiritual pulse——"

"I know the disorrder," cried Sampson, eagerly: "the pashints have a hot fit (and then they are saints): followed in due course by the cold fit (and then they are the worst of sinners): and so on in endless rotation: and, if they could only realise my great discovery, the perriodicity of all disease, and time their sintiments, they would find the hot fit and the cold return chronometrically, at intervals as riglar as the tide's ebb and flow; and the soul has nothing to do with either febrile symptom. Why Religion, apart from intermittent Fever of the Brain, is just the caumest, peaceablest, sedatest thing in all the world."

"Ah, you are too deep for me, my good friend. All I know is that she is one of this new school, whom I take the liberty to call 'THE FIDGETTY CHRISTIANS.' They cannot let their poor souls alone a minute; and they pester one day and night with the millennium; as if we shall not all be dead long before that: but the worst is they apply the language of earthly passion to the Saviour of mankind, and make one's flesh creep at their blasphemies; so coarse, so familiar; like that rude multitude which thronged and pressed Him when on earth. But, after all, she

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came to the church, and took my Juli's part; so that shows she has *principle;* and do pray spare me her feelings in any step you take against that dishonourable person her father: I must go back to his victim, my poor, poor child: I dare not leave her long. Oh, Doctor, such a night! and, if she dozes for a minute, it is to wake with a scream and tell me she sees him dead: sometimes he is drowned; sometimes stained with blood; but always dead."

This evening Mr. Hardie came along in a fly with his luggage on the box, returning to Musgrove Cottage as from Yorkshire: in passing Albion Villa he cast it a look of vindictive triumph. He got home and nodded by the fire in his character of a man wearied by a long journey. Jane made him some tea, and told him how Alfred had disappeared on his wedding-day.

"The young scamp," said he: he added, coolly, "it is no business of mine; I had no hand in making the match, thank Heaven." In the conversation that ensued, he said he had always been averse to the marriage; but not so irreconcilably as to approve this open breach of faith with a respectable young lady: "this will recoil upon our name, you know, at this critical time," said he.

Then Jane mustered courage to confess that she had gone to the wedding herself: "Dear papa," said she, "it was made clear to me that the Dodds are acting in what they consider a most friendly way to

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you. They think——I cannot tell you what they think. But, if mistaken, they are sincere: and so, after prayer, and you not being here for me to consult, I did go to the church. Forgive me, papa: I have but one brother; and she is my dear friend."

Mr. Hardie's countenance fell at this announcement, and he looked almost diabolical. But on second thoughts he cleared up wonderfully: "I will be frank with you, Jenny: if the wedding had come off, I should have been deeply hurt at your supporting that little monster of ingratitude; he not only marries against his father's will (that is done every day), but slanders and maligns him publicly in his hour of poverty and distress. But, now that he has broken faith and insulted Miss Dodd as well as me, I declare I am glad you were there, Jenny. It will separate us from his abominable conduct. But what does he say for himself? What reason does he give?"

"Oh, it is all mystery as yet."

"Well, but he must have sent some explanation to the Dodds."

"He may have: I don't know. I have not ventured to intrude on my poor insulted friend. Papa, I hear her distress is fearful; they fear for her reason. Oh if harm comes to her, God will assuredly punish him whose heartlessness and treachery has brought her to it. Mark my words," she continued with great emotion, "this cruel act will not go unpunished even in this world."

"There, there, change the subject," said Mr.

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Hardie peevishly. "What have I to do with his pranks? he has disowned me for his father, and I disown him for my son."

The next day Peggy Black called, and asked to see master. Old Betty, after the first surprise, looked at her from head to foot, and foot to head, as if measuring her for a suit of Disdain; and told her she might carry her own message; then flounced into the kitchen, and left her to shut the street door, which she did. She went and dropped her curtsey at the parlour door, and in a miminy piminy voice said she was come to make her submission, and would he forgive her, and give her another trial? Her penitence, after one or two convulsive efforts, ended in a very fair flow of tears.

Mr. Hardie shrugged his shoulders, and asked Jane if the girl had ever been saucy to her.

"Oh no, papa: indeed I have no fault to find with poor Peggy."

"Well then go to your work, and try and not offend Betty; remember she is older than you."

Peggy went for her box and bandbox, and reinstated herself quietly, and all old Betty's endeavours to irritate her only elicited a calm cunning smile, with a depression of her downy eyelashes.

Albion Villa.

Next morning Edward Dodd was woke out of a sound sleep at about four o'clock, by a hand upon his shoulder: he looked up, and rubbed his eyes; it

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was Julia standing by his bedside dressed, and in her bonnet: "Edward," she said in a hurried whisper, "there is foul play: I cannot sleep, I cannot be idle. He has been decoyed away, and perhaps murdered. Oh, pray get up and go to the police office or somewhere with me."

"Very well; but wait till morning."

"No; now; now; now; now. I shall never go out of doors in the daytime again. Wait? I'm going crazy with wait, wait, wait, wait, waiting."

Her hand was like fire on him, and her eyes supernaturally bright.

"There," said Edward with a groan, "go down stairs, and I will be with you directly."

He came down: they went out together: her little burning hand pinched his tight, and her swift foot seemed scarcely to touch the ground; she kept him at his full stride till they got to the central police station. There, at the very thought of facing men, the fiery innocent suddenly shrank together, and covered her blushing face with her hot hands. She sent him in alone. He found an intelligent superintendent, who entered into the case with all the coolness of an old official hand.

Edward came out to his sister, and as he hurried her home, told her what had passed: "The superintendent asked to see the letter; I told him he had taken it with him: that was a pity, he said. Then he made me describe Alfred to a nicety: and the description will go up to London this morning, and

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all over Barkington, and the neighbourhood, and the county."

She stopped to kiss him, then went on again with her head down, and neither spoke till they were nearly home: then Edward told her "the superintendent felt quite sure that the villain was not dead; nor in danger of it."

"Oh, bless him! bless him! for saying so."

"And that he will turn up in London before very long; not in this neighbourhood; he says he must have known the writer of the letter, and his taking his luggage with him shows he has gone off deliberately. My poor little Ju, now do try and look at it as he does, and everybody else does; try and see it as you would if you were a bystander."

She laid her soft hand on his shoulder as if to support herself floating in her sea of doubt: "I do see I am a poor credulous girl; but how *can* my Alfred be false to me? Am I to doubt the Bible? am I to doubt the sun? Is nothing true in heaven or earth? Oh, if I could only have died as I was dressing for church—died while he seemed true! He *is* true; the wicked creature has cast some spell on him: he has gone in a moment of delirium; he will regret what he has done, perhaps regrets it now. I am ungrateful to you, Edward, and to the good policeman, for saying he is not dead. What more do I require? he is dead to me. Edward, let us leave this place. We *were* going: let us go to-day; this very day; oh, take me, and hide me where no one that knows me

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can ever see me again." A flood of tears came to her relief: and she went along sobbing and kissing her brother's hand every now and then.

But, as they drew near the gate of Albion Villa, twilight began to usher in the dawn. Julia shuddered at even that faint light, and fled like a guilty thing, and hid herself sobbing in her own bedroom.

Musgrove Cottage.

Mr. Richard Hardie slept better, since his return from Yorkshire, than he had done for some time past, and therefore woke more refreshed and in better spirits. He knew an honest family was miserable a few doors off; but he did not care. He got up and shaved with a mind at ease. Only, when he had removed the lather from one half his face, he happened to look out of window, and saw on the wall opposite—a placard: a large placard to this effect:

"ONE HUNDRED GUINEAS REWARD!

Whereas on the 11th instant Mr. Alfred Hardie disappeared mysteriously from his lodgings in 15 Mill Street under circumstances suggesting a suspicion of foul play, know all men that the above reward will be paid to any person or persons who shall first inform the undersigned where the said Alfred Hardie is to be found, and what person or persons, if any, have been concerned in his disappearance.

ALEXANDER SAMPSON
39 Pope Street
Napoleon Square
London."

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At sight of this Mr. Hardie was seized with a tremor, that suspended the razor in mid air: he opened the window, and glared at the doctor's notice.

At this moment he himself was a picture: not unlike those half cleaned portraits the picture restorers hang out as specimens of their art.

"Insolent interfering fool," he muttered, and began to walk the room in agitation. After a while he made a strong effort, shaved the other half, and dressed slowly, thinking hard all the time. The result was, he went out before breakfast (which he had not done for years), and visited the "White Lion." One of Sampson's posters had just been stuck up near the inn; he quietly pulled it down and then entered the yard; and had a serious talk with the squinting ostler.

On his return, Jane was waiting breakfast. The first word to him was: "Papa, have you seen?"

"What, the Reward!" said he, indifferently. "Yes, I noticed it at our door as I came home."

Jane said it was a very improper and most indelicate interference in their affairs. And went on to say with heightened colour: "I have just told Peggy to take it down."

"Not for the world!" cried Mr. Hardie, losing all his calmness real or feigned; and he rang the bell hastily. On Peggy's appearing, he said anxiously, "I do not wish that Notice interfered with."

"I shouldn't think of touching it without your orders, sir," said she, quietly, and shot him a feline glance from under her pale lashes.

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Jane coloured, and looked a little mortified: but on Peggy's retiring, Mr. Hardie explained that, whether judicious or not, it was a friendly act of Dr. Sampson's; and to pull down his notice would look like siding with the boy against those he had injured: "Besides," said he, "why should you and I burk inquiry? Ill as he has used me, I am his father, and not altogether without anxiety. Suppose those doctors should be right about him, you know?"

Jane had for some time been longing to call at Albion Villa and sympathise with her friend; and now curiosity was superadded; she burned to know whether the Dodds knew of or approved this placard. She asked her father whether he thought she could go there with propriety. "Why not?" said he, cheerfully, and with assumed carelessness.

In reality it was essential to him that Jane should visit the Dodds. Surrounded by pitfals, threatened with a new and mysterious assailant in the eccentric, but keen and resolute Sampson, this artful man, who had now become a very Machiavel—constant danger and deceit had so sharpened and deepened his great natural abilities—was preparing amongst other defences a shield; and that shield was a sieve; and that sieve was his daughter. In fact, ever since his return, he had acted and spoken at the Dodds through Jane, but with a masterly appearance of simplicity and mere confidential intercourse. At

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least I think this is the true clue to all his recent remarks.

Jane, a truthful, unsuspicious girl, was all the fitter instrument of the cunning monster. She went and called at Albion Villa, and was received by Edward, Mrs. Dodd being up-stairs with Julia, and in five minutes she had told him what her father, she owned, had said to her in confidence. "But," said she, "the reason I repeat these things is to make peace, and that you may not fancy there is any one in our house so cruel, so unchristian, as to approve Alfred's perfidy. Oh, and papa said candidly he disliked the match, but then he disliked this way of ending it far more."

Mrs. Dodd came down in due course, and kissed her; but told her Julia could not see even her at present. "I think, dear," said she, "in a day or two she will see *you;* but no one else: and for her sake we shall now hurry our departure from this place, where she was once so happy."

Mrs. Dodd did not like to begin about Alfred; but Jane had no such scruples; she inveighed warmly against his conduct, and, ere she left the house, had quite done away with the faint suspicion Sampson had engendered, and brought both Mrs. Dodd and Edward back to their original opinion that the elder Hardie had nothing on earth to do with the perfidy of the younger.

Just before dinner a gentleman called on Edward, and proved to be a policeman in plain clothes. He

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had been sent from the office to sound the ostler at the "White Lion," and, if necessary, to threaten him. The police knew, though nobody else in Barkington did, that this ostler had been in what rogues call trouble, twice, and, as the police can starve a man of the kind by blowing on him, and can reward him by keeping dark, he knows better than withhold information from them.

However, on looking for this ostler, he had left his place that very morning; had decamped with mysterious suddenness.

Here was a puzzle.

Had the man gone without noticing the reward? Had somebody outbid the reward? or was it a strange coincidence, and did he after all know nothing?

The police thought it was no coincidence, and he did know something; so they had telegraphed to the London office to mark him down.

Edward thanked his visitor; but, on his retiring, told his mother he could make neither head nor tail of it; and she only said, "We seem surrounded by mystery."

Meantime, unknown to these bewildered ones, Greek was meeting Greek only a few yards off.

Mr. Hardie was being undermined by a man of his own calibre, one too cautious to communicate with the Dodds, or any one else, till his work looked ripe.

The game began thus: a decent mechanic, who lodged hard by, lounging with his pipe near the gate

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of Musgrove Cottage, offered to converse with old Betty: she gave him a rough answer; but with a touch of ineradicable vanity must ask Peggy if she wanted a sweetheart, because there was a hungry one at the gate: "Why he wanted to begin on an old woman like me." Peggy inquired what he had said to her.

"Oh, he begun where most of them ends, if they get so far at all: axed me was I comfortable here; if not, he knew a young man wanted a nice tidy body to keep house for him."

Peggy pricked up her ears; and, in less than a quarter of an hour, went for a box of lucifers in a new bonnet and clean collar. She tripped past the able mechanic very accidentally, and he bestowed an admiring smile on her, but said nothing, only smoked. However, on her return, he contrived to detain her, and paid her a good many compliments, which she took laughingly and with no great appearance of believing them. However, there is no going by that: compliments sink: and within forty-eight hours the able mechanic had become a hot wooer of Peggy Black, always on the look-out for her day and night, and telling her all about the lump of money he had saved, and how he could double his income, if he had but a counter, and tidy wife behind it. Peggy gossiped in turn, and let out amongst the rest that she had been turned off once, just for answering a little sharply; and now it was the other way; her master was a trifle too civil at times.

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"Who could help it?" said the able mechanic, rapturously; and offered a pressing civility; which Peggy fought off.

"Not so free, young man," said she. "Kissing is the prologue to sin."

"How do you know that?" inquired the able mechanic, with the sly humour of his class.

"It is a saying," replied Peggy, demurely.

At last, one night, Mr. Green the Detective, for he it was, put his arm round his new sweetheart's waist, and approached the subject nearest his heart. He told her he had just found out there was money enough to be made in one day to set them up for life in a nice little shop; and she could help in it.

After this inviting preamble he crept towards the 14,000*l.* by artful questions; and soon elicited that there had been high words between Master and Mr. Alfred about that very sum; she had listened at the door and heard. Taking care to combine close courtship with cunning interrogatories, he was soon enabled to write to Dr. Sampson, and say that a servant of Mr. Hardie's was down on him, and reported that he carried a large pocket-book in his breast-pocket by day; and she had found the dent of it under his pillow at night; a stroke of observation very creditable in an unprofessional female: on this he had made it his business to meet Mr. Hardie in broad day, and sure enough the pocket-book was always there. He added, that the said Hardie's face wore an expression which he had seen

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more than once when respectable parties went in for felony: and altogether thought they might now take out a warrant and proceed in the regular way.

Sampson received this news with great satisfaction: but was crippled by the interwoven relations of the parties.

To arrest Mr. Hardie on a warrant would entail a prosecution for felony, and separate Jane and Edward for ever.

He telegraphed Green to meet him at the station; and reached Barkington at eight that very evening. Green and he proceeded to Albion Villa, and there they held a long and earnest consultation with Edward; and at last, on certain conditions, Mr. Green and Edward consented to act on Sampson's plan. Green, by this time, knew all Mr. Hardie's out of door habits; and assured them that at ten o'clock he would walk up and down the road for at least half an hour, the night being dry. It wanted about a quarter to ten, when Mrs. Dodd came down, and proposed supper to the travellers. Sampson declined it for the present; and said they had work to do at eleven. Then, making the others a signal not to disclose anything at present, he drew her aside and asked after Julia.

Mrs. Dodd sighed:—"She goes from one thing to another, but always returns to one idea; that he is a victim, not a traitor."

"Well, tell her in one hour, the money shall be in the house."

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"The money! What does she care?"

"Well, say we shall know all about Alfred by eleven o'clock."

"My dear friend, be prudent," said Mrs. Dodd. "I feel alarmed; you were speaking almost in a whisper when I came in."

"Y' are very obsairvant: but dawnt be uneasy; we are three to one. Just go and comfort Miss Julee with my message."

"Ah, that I will," she said.

She was no sooner gone than they all stole out into the night, and a pitch dark night it was; but Green had a powerful dark lantern to use if necessary.

They waited, Green at the gate of Musgrove Cottage, the other two a little way up the road.

Ten o'clock struck. Some minutes passed without the expected signal from Green; and Edward and Sampson began to shiver. For it was very cold and dark, and in the next place they were honest men going to take the law into their own hands, and the law sometimes calls that breaking the law. "Confound him!" muttered Sampson: "if he does not soon come I shall run away. It is bitterly cold."

Presently footsteps were heard approaching; but no signal: it proved to be only a fellow in a smock frock rolling home from the public-house.

Just as his footsteps died away a low hoot like a plaintive owl was heard, and they knew their game was afoot.

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Presently, tramp, tramp, came the slow and stately march of him they had hunted down.

He came very slowly, like one lost in meditation: and these amateur policemen's hearts beat louder, and louder, as he drew nearer and nearer.

At last in the blackness of the night a shadowy outline was visible: another tramp or two, it was upon them.

Now the cautious Mr. Green had stipulated that the pocket-book should first be felt for, and, if not there, the matter should go no farther. So Edward made a stumble and fell against Mr. Hardie and felt his left breast: the pocket-book was there:—"Yes," he whispered: and Mr. Hardie, in the act of remonstrating at his clumsiness, was pinned behind, and his arms strapped with wonderful rapidity and dexterity. Then first he seemed to awake to his danger, and uttered a stentorian cry of terror, that rang through the night and made two of his three captors tremble.

"Cut that," said Green sternly, "or you'll get into trouble."

Mr. Hardie lowered his voice directly: "Do not kill me, do not hurt me;" he murmured, "I'm but a poor man now. Take my little money; it is in my waistcoat pocket; but spare my life. You see I don't resist."

"Come, stash your gab, my lad," said Green, contemptuously, addressing him just as he would any other of the birds he was accustomed to capture:

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"It's not your stiff that is wanted, but Captain Dodd's."

"Captain Dodd's?" cried the prisoner with a wonderful assumption of innocence.

"Ay, the pocket-book," said Green: "here, this! this!" He tapped on the pocket-book, and instantly the prisoner uttered a cry of agony, and sprang into the road with an agility no one would have thought possible; but Edward and Green soon caught him, and, the Doctor joining, they held him, and Green tore his coat open.

The pocket-book was not there. He tore open his waistcoat; it was not in the waistcoat: but it was sewed to his very shirt on the outside.

Green wrenched it away, and bidding the other two go behind the prisoner and look over his shoulder, unseen themselves, slipped the shade of his lantern.

Mr. Hardie had now ceased to struggle and to exclaim; he stood sullen, mute, desperate; while an agitated face peered eagerly over each of his shoulders at the open pocket-book in Green's hands, on which the lantern now poured a narrow but vivid stream of light.

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CHAPTER XVI.

THERE was not a moment to lose, so Green emptied the pocket-book into his hat, and sifted the contents in a turn of the hand, announcing each discovery in a whisper to his excited, and peering, associates:—

"A lot of receipts."

"Of no use to any one but me," said the prisoner earnestly.

"Two miniatures; gold rims, pinchbeck backs."

"They are portraits of my children when young: Heaven forgive me, I could not give them up to my creditors: surely, surely, you will not rob me of them."

"Stash your gab," said Mr. Green roughly. "Here's a guinea, Queen Anne's reign."

"It belonged to my great-grandfather: take it, but you will let me redeem it; I will give 5*l.* for it, poor as I am: you can leave it on my door-step, and I'll leave the 5*l.*"

"Stow your gab. Letters; papers covered with figures. Stay, what is this? a lot of memoranda."

"They are of the most private and delicate character. Pray do not expose my family misfor-

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tunes." And Mr. Hardie, who of late had been gathering composure, showed some signs of agitation; the two figures glaring over his shoulder shared it, and his remonstrance only made Green examine the papers keenly: they might contain some clue to the missing money. It proved a miscellaneous record: the price of Stocks at various days; notes of the official assignee's remarks in going over the books, &c. At last, however, Green's quick eye fell upon a fainter entry in pencil; figures: 1, 4; yes, actually 14,000*l.* "All right," he said: and took the paper close to the lantern, and began to spell it out:

"'This day Alfred told me to my face I had 14,000*l.* of Captain Dodd's. We had an angry discussion. What can he mean? Drs. Wycherley and Osmond, this same day, afflicted me with hints that he is deranged, or partly. I saw no signs of it before. Wrote to my brother entreating him to give me 200*l.* to replace the sum which I really have wronged this respectable and now most afflicted family of. I had better withdraw——'" Here Mr. Hardie interrupted him with sorrowful dignity: "These are mere family matters; if you are a man respect them."

Green went reading on like Fate: "'Better withdraw my opposition to the marriage, or else it seems my own flesh and blood will go about the place blackening my reputation.'"

Mr. Hardie stamped on the ground. "I tell you

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on my honour as a gentleman there's no money there but my grandfather's guinea. My money is all in my waistcoat pocket, where you *will not* look."

A flutter of uneasiness seemed to come over the detective: he darkened his lantern, and replaced the pocket-book hurriedly in the prisoner's breast, felt him all over in a minute, and, to keep up the farce, robbed him.

"Only eight yellow boys," said he contemptuously to his mates. He then slipped the money back into Hardie's coat-pocket, and conducted him to his own gate, tied him to it by the waist, and ordered him not to give the alarm for ten minutes on pain of death.

"I consent," said Mr. Hardie, "and thank you for abstaining from violence."

"All right, my tulip," said Mr. Green cheerfully; and drew his companions quietly away. But the next moment he began to run, and, making a sudden turn, dived into a street, then into a passage, and so winded and doubled till he got to a small public-house: he used some flash word, and they were shown a private room. "Wait here an hour for me," he whispered; "I must see who liberates him, and whether he is really as innocent as he reads, or we have been countermined by the devil's own tutor."

The unexpected turn the evidence had taken, evidence of their own choosing too, cleared Mr. Hardie with the unprofessionals. Edward embraced this conclusion as a matter of course, and urged the

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character of that gentleman's solitary traducer; Alfred was a traitor, and therefore why not a slanderer?

Even Sampson, on the whole, inclined to a similar conclusion.

At this crisis of the discussion a red-haired pedlar, with very large whiskers and the remains of a black eye, put his head in, and asked whether Tom Green was there. "No," said the Doctor stoutly, not desiring company of this stamp. "Don't know the lad."

The pedlar laughed: "There is not many that do know him at all hours; however, he *is* here, sir." And he whipped off the red hair, and wiped off the black eye, and lo Green ipse. He received their compliments on his Protean powers, and told them he had been just a minute too late; Mr. Hardie was gone, and so he had lost the chance of seeing who came to help him, and of hearing the first words that passed between the two: this, he said, was a very great pity; for it would have shown him in one moment whether certain suspicions of his were correct. Pressed as to what these suspicions were, he begged to be excused saying any more for the present. The Doctor, however, would not let him off so, but insisted on his candid opinion.

"Well, sir," said Green, "I never was more puzzled in my life, owing to not being near hand when he was untied. It looks all square however. There's only one little thing that don't fit somehow."

They both asked in a breath what that was.

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"The sovs. were all marked."

They asked how he knew; and had he got them in his pocket to show?"

Green uttered a low chuckling laugh: "What me fake the beans, now I live on this side the hedge? never knew a cove mix his liquors that way but it hurt his health soon or late. No, I took them out of one pocket, and felt of them as I slipped them into the other. Ye see, gents, to do any good on my lay, a man must train his senses as well as his mind: he must have a hare's ear, and a hawk's eye, a bloodhound's nose, and a lady's hand with steel fingers and a silk skin. Now look at that bunch of fives," continued the master; and laid a hand white and soft as a duchess's on the table: "it can put the bracelets on a giant, or find a sharper's nail-mark on the back of the knave of clubs. The beans were marked. Which it is a small thing, but it don't fit the rest. Here's an unsuspicious gent took by surprise, in moonlight meditation fancy free, and all his little private family matters found in his innocent bosom quite promiscuous; but his beans marked: that don't dovetail nohow. Gents, did ever you hear of the man that went to the bottom of the bottomless pit to ease his mind? Well, he was the head of my family: I must go to the bottom whether there's one or not. And just now I see but one way."

"And what is that?" inquired both his companions in some alarm.

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"Oh, I mustn't threaten it," said Green, "or I shall never have the stomach to do it. But dear me, this boozing ken is a very unfit place for you, you are champagne-gents not dog's nose ones. Now you part and make tracks for home, one on foot, and one in a fly. You won't see me, nor hear of me again, till I've something fresh."

And so the confederates parted, and Sampson and Edward met at Albion Villa; and Edward told his mother what they had done, and his conviction that Mr. Hardie was innocent, and Alfred a slanderer as well as a traitor: "And indeed," said he, "if we had but stopped to reflect, we should have seen how unlikely the money was not to be lost in the Agra. Why the 'Tiser says she went to pieces almost directly she struck. What we ought to have done was, not to listen to Alfred Hardie like fools, but write to Lloyd's like people in their senses. I'll do it this minute, and find out the surviving officers of the ship: they will be able to give us information on that head." Mrs. Dodd approved; and said she would write to her kind correspondent Mrs. Beresford: and she did sit down to her desk at once. As for Sampson he returned to town next morning, not quite convinced, but thoroughly staggered; and determined for once to resign his own judgment, and abide the result of Mrs. Dodd's correspondence and Mr. Green's sagacity. All he insisted on was, that his placard about Alfred should be continued: he left money for this, and Edward against the grain

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consented to see it done. But placards are no monopoly: in the afternoon only a section of Sampson's was visible in most parts of the town by reason of a poster to this effect pasted half over it:

"Fifty Guineas Reward.

"Whereas yesterday evening at ten o'clock Richard Hardie Esq. of Musgrove Cottage, Barkington, was assaulted at his own door by three ruffians, who rifled his pockets, and read his private memoranda, and committed other acts of violence, the shock of which has laid him on a bed of sickness, the above reward shall be paid to any person, or persons, who will give such information as shall lead to the detection of all or any one of the miscreants concerned in this outrage.

The above reward will be paid by Mr. Thomas Hardie, of Clare Court, Yorkshire."

On this the impartial police came to Mr. Hardie's and made inquiries. He received them in bed, and told them particulars: and they gathered from Peggy that she had heard a cry of distress, and opened the kitchen door; and that Betty and she had ventured out together, and found poor master tied to the gate with an old cord; this she produced, and the police inspected and took it away with them.

At sight of that Notice, Edward felt cold and then hot, and realised the false and perilous position into which he had been betrayed: "So much for being wiser than the law," he said: "what are we now but

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three footpads?" This, and the insult his sister had received, made the place poison to him; and hastened their departure by a day or two: the very next day (Thursday) an affiche on the walls of Albion Villa announced that Mr. Chippenham, auctioneer, would sell next Wednesday on the premises the greater part of the furniture, plate, china, glass, Oriental inlaid boxes and screens, with several superb India shawls, scarfs, and dresses; also a twenty-one years' lease of the villa; seventeen to run.

Edward took unfurnished apartments in London, near Russell Square: a locality in which, as he learned from the 'Tiser, the rooms were large and cheap; he packed just so much furniture as was essential; no knick-knacks. It was to go by rail on Monday; Mrs. Dodd and Julia were to follow on Tuesday: Edward to stay at Barkington and look after the sale.

Meantime their secret ally, Mr. Green, was preparing his threatened coup. The more he reflected the more he suspected that he had been outwitted by Peggy Black; she had led him on, and the pocket-book had been planted for him. If so, why Peggy was a genius, and in his own line; and he would marry her, and so kill two birds with one stone: make a Detective of her (there was a sad lack of female Detectives); and, once his wife, she would split on her master, and he should defeat that old soldier at last, and get a handsome slice of the 14,000*l.*

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He manœuvred thus; first, he went back to London for a day or two to do other jobs, and to let this matter cool: then he returned, and wrote from a town near Parkington to Peggy Black, telling her he had been sent away suddenly on a job, but his heart had remained behind with his Peggy: would she meet him at the gate at nine that evening? He had something very particular to say to her. As to the nature of the business the enclosed would give her a hint. She might name her own day, and the sooner the better.

The enclosed was a wedding ring.

At nine this extraordinary pair of lovers met at the gate; but Peggy seemed hardly at her ease; said her master would be coming out and catching her; perhaps they had better walk up the road a bit. "With all my heart," said Green; but he could not help a little sneer: "Your master?" said he: "why he is your servant, as I am. What, is he jealous?"

"I don't know what you mean, young man," said Peggy.

"I'll tell you when we are married."

"La, that is a long time to wait for my answer: why we ain't asked in church yet."

"There's no need of that; I can afford a special licence."

"Lawk a daisy: why you be a gentleman then."

"No, but I can keep my wife like a lady."

"You sounds very tempting," murmured Peggy

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throwing her skirt over her head—for a drizzle was beginning—and walking slower and slower.

Then he made hot love to her, and pressed her hard to name the day.

She coquetted with the question till they came near the mouth of a dark lane, called Lovers' Walk; then, as he insisted on an answer, she hung her head bashfully, and coughed a little cough. At which preconcerted signal a huge policeman sprang out of the lane and collared Mr. Green.

On this Peggy, who was all Lie from head to heel, uttered a little scream of dismay and surprise.

Mr. Green laughed.

"Well, you *are* a downy one," said he. "I'll marry you all the more for this."

The Detective put his hands suddenly inside the policeman's, caught him by the bosom with his right hand by way of fulcrum; and with his left by the chin, which he forced violently back, and gave him a slight Cornish trip at the same moment; down went the policeman on the back of his head a fearful crack: Green then caught the astonished Peggy round the neck, kissed her lips violently, and fled like the wind; removed all traces of his personal identity, and up to London by the train in the character of a young swell, with a self-fitting eyeglass and a long moustache the colour of his tender mistress's eyebrow: tow.

From town he wrote to her, made her a formal

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offer of marriage; and gave her an address to write to "should she at any time think more kindly of him and of his sincere affection."

I suppose he specified sincere because it was no longer sincere: he hurled the offer into Musgrove Cottage by way of an apple of discord; at least so I infer from the memorandum, with which he retired at present from the cash-hunt.

"Mr. Hardie has the stiff, I think: but, if so, it is planted somewhere; doesn't carry it about him; my Peggy is his mistress: nothing to be done till they split."

Victorious so far, Mr. Hardie had still one pressing anxiety; Dr. Sampson's placard: this had been renewed, and stared him everywhere in the face. Every copy of it he encountered made him shiver: if he had been a man of impulse, he would have torn it down wherever he saw it: but he knew that would not do. However, learning from Jane, who had it from old Betty, who had it from Sarah, that Mrs. and Miss Dodd would leave for London the day before the sale, and Edward the day after it, he thought he might venture in the busy intermediate time to take some liberties with it. This he did with excellent tact and judgment; Peggy and a bill-sticker were seen in conference, and, soon after, the huge bills of a travelling circus were pasted right over both the rival advertisements in which the name of Hardie figured. The consequence was,

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Edward raised no objection; he was full of the sale for one thing; but I suspect he was content to see his own false move pasted over on such easy terms.

On the Monday morning Peggy brought in the letters, and Jane saw one in Alfred's handwriting. She snatched it up, and cried "Papa, from Alfred!" And she left off making the tea, while her father opened it with comparative composure.

This coolness, however, did not outlast the perusal: "The young ruffian!" said he: "would you believe it, Jenny, he accuses me of being the cause of his last business."

"Let me see, papa."

He held her out the letter; but hesitated and drew it back: "My dear, it would give you pain to see your poor father treated so. Here's a specimen: 'What could they expect but that the son of a sharper would prove a traitor? You stole her money; I her affections, of which I am unworthy.' Now what do you think of that?"

"Unhappy Alfred!" said Jane. "No, papa, I would not read it, if you are insulted in it. But where is he?"

"The letter is dated Paris. See!" And he showed her the date: "but he says here, he is coming back to London directly; and he orders me in the most peremptory way to be ready with my accounts, and pay him over his fortune. Well, he is

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alive at all events: really my good, kind, interfering, pragmatical, friend Sampson with his placards made me feel uneasy, more uneasy than I would own to you, Jenny."

"Unhappy Alfred!" cried Jane, with the tears in her eyes; "and poor papa!"

"Oh never mind me," said Mr. Hardie; "now that I know no harm has come to him, I really don't care a straw: I have got one child that loves me, and that I love."

"Ah yes, dear, dear papa, and that will always love you, and never, never, disobey you in small things or great." She rose from the table and sealed this with a pious kiss; and, when she sat down with a pink flush on her delicate cheek, his hard eye melted and dwelt on her with beaming tenderness. His heart yearned over her, and a pang went through it: to think that he must deceive even her, the one sweet soul that loved him!

It was a passing remorse: the successful plotter soon predominated, and it was with unmixed satisfaction he saw her put on her bonnet directly after breakfast, and hurry off to Albion Villa to play the part of his unconscious sieve.

He himself strolled in the opposite direction, not to seem to be watching her.

He was in good spirits; felt like a general, who, after repulsing many desperate attacks successfully, orders an advance, and sees the tide of battle roll away from his bayonets. His very body seemed

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elastic, indomitable; he walked lustily out into the country, sniffed the perfumed hedges, and relished life. To be sure he could not walk away from all traces of his misdeeds; he fell in with objects, that to an ordinary sinner might have spoiled the walk, and even marred the spring-time; he found his creditor Maxley with grizzly beard, and blood-shot eyes, belabouring a milestone; and two small boys quizzing him, and pelting him with mud: and soon after, he met his creditor, old Dr. Phillips, in a cart, coming back to Barkington to end his days there, at the almshouse. But to our triumphant Bankrupt and Machiavel these things were literally nothing; he paced complacently on, and cared no more for either of those his wrecks, than the smiling sea itself seems to care for the dead ships and men it washed ashore a week ago.

He came home before luncheon for his gossip with Jane; but she had not returned. All the better; her budget would be the larger.

To while the time he got his file of the Times, and amused himself noting down the fluctuations in Peruvian bonds.

While thus employed he heard a loud knock at his door, and soon after Peggy's voice and a man's in swift collision. Hasty feet came along the passage, the parlour door opened, and a young man rushed in pale as ashes, and stared at him; he was breathless, and his lips moved, but no sound came.

It was Edward Dodd.

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Mr. Hardie rose like a tower and manned himself to repulse this fresh assault.

The strange visitor gasped out, "You are wanted at our house."

CHAPTER XVII.

JANE HARDIE found Albion Villa in the miserable state that precedes an auction; the house raw, its contents higgledy-piggledy. The stair carpets, and drawing-room carpets, were up, and in rolls in the dining-room; the bulk of the furniture was there too; the auction was to be in that room. The hall was clogged with great packages, and littered with small, all awaiting the railway carts; and Edward, dusty and deliquescent, was cording, strapping, and nailing them at the gallop, in his shirt sleeves.

Jane's heart sank at the visible signs of his departure. She sighed; and then, partly to divert his attention, told him hastily there was a letter from Alfred. On this he ran upstairs and told Mrs. Dodd; and she came down stairs, and after a conversation took Jane up softly to her friend's room.

They opened the door gently, and Jane saw the grief she was come to console; or to embitter.

Such a change! instead of the bright, elastic, impetuous, young beauty, there sat a pale languid girl, with "weary of the world" written on every part of her eloquent body; her right hand dangled

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by her side, and on the ground beneath it lay a piece of work she had been attempting; but it had escaped from those listless fingers: her left arm was stretched at full length on the table with an unspeakable abandon, and her brow laid wearily on it above the elbow. So lies the wounded bird, so droops the broken lily.

She did not move for Jane's light foot. She often sat thus, a drooping statue, and let people come and go unheeded.

Jane's heart yearned for her. She came softly and laid a little hand lightly on her shoulder, and, true to her creed that we must look upward for consolation, said in her ear, and in solemn, silvery tones, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Julia turned at this and flung her arms round Jane's neck, and panted heavily.

Jane kissed her, and, with the tears in her eyes, proceeded to pour out, from a memory richly stored with Scripture, those blessed words it is full of, words that in our hours of ease or biblical criticism pass over the mind like some drowsy chime; but in the bitter day of anguish and bereavement, when the body is racked, the soul darkened, shine out like stars to the mariner; seem then first to swell to their real size and meaning, and come to writhing mortals like pitying seraphim, divinity on their faces and healing on their wings.

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Julia sighed heavily: "Ah," she said, "these are sweet words. But I am not ripe for them. You show me the true path of happiness: but I don't *want* to be happy; it's *him* I want to be happy. If the angels came for me and took me to heaven this moment, I should be miserable there, if I thought *he* was in eternal torment; ay, I should be as miserable there as I am here. Oh Jane, when God means to comfort me, He will show me *he* is alive; till then words are wasted on me, even Bible words."

"Tell her your news, my dear," said Mrs. Dodd quietly. She was one of those, who take human nature as it is, and make the best of it.

"Julia dear," said Jane, "your fears are extravagant; indeed: Alfred is alive, we know."

Julia trembled, but said nothing.

"He has written to-day."

"Ah! To you?"

"No, to papa."

"I don't believe it. Why to him?"

"But I saw the letter, dear; I had it in my hand."

"Did you read it?" asked Julia, trembling now like an aspen, and fluttering like a bird.

"No, but I read the address, and the date inside, and I saw the handwriting; and I was offered the letter, but papa told me it was full of abuse of him, so I declined* to read it; however, I will get it for *you*."

* This was one of those involuntary inaccuracies which creep into mortal statements.

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Mrs. Dodd thanked her warmly; but asked her if she could not in the mean time give some idea of the contents.

"Oh yes, Mrs. Dodd: papa read me out a great deal of it. He was in Paris, but just starting for London: and he demanded his money and his accounts. You know papa is one of his trustees."

"Well, but," said Mrs. Dodd, "was there nothing —nothing about——?"

"Oh yes there was," said Jane, "only I—well then, for dear Julia's sake—the letter said, 'What wonder the son of a sharper should prove a traitor? *You* have stolen her money, and *I* her affections, and'—oh, I can't, I can't." And Jane Hardie began to cry.

Mrs. Dodd embraced her like a mother, and entered into her filial feelings: Mrs. Dodd had never seen her so weak, and, therefore, never thought her so amiable. Thus occupied they did not at first observe how these tidings were changing Julia.

But presently looking up they saw her standing at her full height, on fire with wrath and insulted pride.

"Ah, you have brought me comfort," she cried. 'Mamma, I shall hate and scorn this man some day, as much as I hate and scorn myself now for every tear I have shed for him."

They tried to calm her, but in vain; a new gust of passion possessed the ardent young creature, and would have vent. She reddened from bosom to brow, and the scalding tears ran down her flaming

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cheeks, and she repeated between her clenched teeth, "My veins are not filled with skim-milk, I can tell you: you have seen how I can love, you shall see how I can hate." And with this she went haughtily out of the room, not to expose the passion which overpowered her.

Mrs. Dodd took advantage of her absence to thank Jane for her kindness, and told her she had also received some letters by this morning's post, and thought it would be neither kind on her part nor just to conceal their purport from her. She then read her a letter from Mrs. Beresford, and another from Mr. Grey, in answer to queries about the 14,000*l.*

Sharpe, I may as well observe, was at sea; Bayliss drowned.

Mrs. Beresford knew nothing about the matter.

Mr. Grey was positive Captain Dodd, when in command, had several thousand pounds in his cabin: Mrs. Beresford's Indian servant had been detected trying to steal it, and put in irons: believed the lady had not been told the cause—out of delicacy: and Captain Roberts had liberated him. As to whether the money had escaped the wreck—if on Captain Dodd's person, it might have been saved; but if not, it was certainly lost: for Captain Dodd to his knowledge had run on deck from the passengers' cabin the moment the ship struck, and had remained there till she went to pieces; and everything was washed out of her.

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"Our own opinion," said Mrs. Dodd, "I mean Edward's and mine, is now, that the money was lost in the ship; and you can tell your papa so, if you like."

Jane thanked her, and said she thought so too; and what a sad thing it was.

Soon after this Julia returned, pale and calm as a statue, and sat down humbly beside Jane: "O, pray with me," she said: "pray that I may not hate, for to hate is to be wicked; and pray that I may not love, for to love is to be miserable."

Mrs. Dodd retired, with her usual tact and self-denial.

Then Jane Hardie, being alone with her friend, and full of sorrow, sympathy, and faith, found words of eloquence almost divine to raise her.

With these pious consolations Julia's pride and self-respect now co-operated; relieved of her great terror, she felt her insult to her fingers' ends: "I'll never degrade myself so far as to pine for another lady's lover," she said. "I'll resume my duties in another sphere, and try to face the world by degrees. I am not quite alone in it: I have my mother still —and my Redeemer."

Some tears forced their way at these brave, gentle words. Jane gave her time.

Then she said: "Begin by putting on your bonnet, and visiting with me. Come with one who is herself thwarted in the carnal affections; come with her and see how sick some are, and we two in health;

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how racked with pain some are, and we two at ease; how hungry some, and we have abundance; and, above all, in what spiritual deserts some lie, while we walk in the gospel light."

"Oh that I had the strength," said Julia; "I'll try."

She put on her bonnet, and went down with her friend: but at the street door the strange feeling of shame overpowered her: she blushed, and trembled, and begged to substitute the garden for the road. Jane consented, and said everything must have a beginning.

The fresh air, the bursting buds, and all the face of nature, did Julia good; and she felt it: "You little angel," said she, with something of her old impetuosity, "you have saved me. I was making myself worse by shutting myself up in that one miserable room."

They walked hand in hand for a good half hour, and then Jane said she must go: papa would miss her. Julia was sorry to part with her, and almost without thinking accompanied her through the house to the front gate; and that was another point gained. "I never was so sorry to part with you, love," said she. "When will you come again? We leave to-morrow. I am selfish to detain you; but it seems as if my guardian angel was leaving me."

Jane smiled. "I must go," said she, "but I'll leave better angels than I am behind me. I leave you this: 'Humble yourself under the mighty hand

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of God!' When it seems most harsh, then it is most loving. Pray for faith to say with me, 'Lead us by a way that we know not.'"

They kissed one another, and Julia stood at the gate and looked lovingly after her, with the tears standing thick in her own violet eyes.

Now Maxley was coming down the road, all grizzly and bloodshot, baited by the boys, who had gradually swelled in number as he drew nearer the town.

Jane was shocked at their heathenish cruelty, and went off the path to remonstrate with them.

On this, Maxley fell upon her, and began beating her about the head and shoulders with his heavy stick.

The miserable boys uttered yells of dismay, but did nothing.

Julia uttered a violent scream, but flew to her friend's aid, and crying, "Oh you wretch! you wretch!" actually caught the man by the throat and shook him violently: he took his hand off Jane Hardie, who instantly sank moaning on the ground, and he cowered like a cur at the voice and the purple gleaming eyes of the excited girl.

The air filled with cries, and Edward ran out of the house to see what was the matter; but on the spot nobody was game enough to come between the furious man and the fiery girl. The consequence was her impetuous courage began to flag, and her eye to waver; the demented man found this out by

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some half animal instinct, and instantly caught her by the shoulder and whirled her down on her knees: then raised his staff high to destroy her.

She screamed, and was just putting up her hands, woman-like, not to see her death as well as feel it, when something dark came past her like a rushing wind, a blow, that sounded exactly like that of a paving ram, caught Maxley on the jaw; and there was Edward Dodd blowing like a grampus with rage, and Maxley on his back in the road; but men under cerebral excitement are not easily stunned, and know no pain: he bounded off the ground, and came at Edward like a Spanish bull. Edward slipped aside, and caught him another ponderous blow that sent him staggering, and his bludgeon flew out of his hand, and Edward caught it; lo! the maniac flew at him again more fiercely than ever: but the young Hercules had seen Jane bleeding on the ground: he dealt her assailant in full career such a murderous stroke with the bludgeon, that the people, who were running from all quarters, shrieked with dismay, not for Jane, but for Maxley; and well they might: that awful stroke laid him senseless, motionless, and mute, in a pool of his own blood.

"Don't kill him, sir; don't kill the man," was the cry.

"Why not?" said Edward sternly. He then kneeled over his sweetheart and lifted her in his arms like a child. Her bonnet was all broken, her eyes were turned upwards and set, and a little blood

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trickled down her cheek; and that cheek seemed streaked white and red.

He was terrified, agonized; yet he gasped out, You are safe, dear, don't be frightened."

She knew the voice.

"Oh, Edward!" she said, piteously and tenderly: and then moaned a little on his broad bosom. He carried her into the house out of the crowd.

Poor old doctor Phillips, coming in to end his days in the almshouse, had seen it all: he got out of his cart and hobbled up. He had been in the army, and had both experience and skill. He got her bonnet off, and at sight of her head looked very grave.

In a minute a bed was laid in the drawing-room, and all the windows and doors open; and Edward, trembling now in every limb, ran to Musgrove Cottage, while Mrs. Dodd and Julia loosened the poor girl's dress, and bathed her wounds with tepid water (the doctor would not allow cold), and put wine carefully to her lips with a teaspoon.

"Wanted at your house, pray what for?" said Mr. Hardie superciliously.

"Oh, sir," said Edward, "such a calamity. Pray come directly. A ruffian has struck her, has hurt her terribly, terribly."

"Her! Who?" asked Mr. Hardie, beginning to be uneasy.

"Who! why Jane, your daughter, man; and there you sit chattering, instead of coming at once."

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Mr. Hardie rose hurriedly and put on his hat, and accompanied him, half confused.

Soon Edward's mute agitation communicated itself to him, and he went striding and trembling by his side.

The crowd had gone with insensible Maxley to the hospital; but the traces of the terrible combat were there. Where Maxley fell the last time, a bullock seemed to have been slaughtered at the least.

The miserable father came on this, and gave a great scream like a woman, and staggered back white as a sheet.

Edward laid his hand on him, for he seemed scarce able to stand.

"No, no, no," he cried, comprehending the mistake at last; "that is not hers—Heaven forbid! That is the madman's who did it; I knocked him down with his own cudgel."

"God bless you! you've killed him, I hope."

"Oh, sir, be more merciful, and then perhaps He will be merciful to us, and not take this angel from us."

"No! no! you are right: good young man. I little thought I had such a friend in your house."

"Don't deceive yourself, sir," said Edward; "it's not you I care for:" then, with a great cry of anguish, "*I love her.*"

At this blunt declaration, so new and so offensive to him, Mr. Hardie winced, and stopped bewildered.

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But they were at the gate, and Edward hurried him on. At the house door he drew back once more; for he felt a shiver of repugnance at entering this hateful house, of whose happiness he was the destroyer.

But enter it he must; it was his fate.

The wife of the poor Captain he had driven mad met him in the passage, her motherly eyes full of tears for him, and both hands held out to him like a pitying angel. "Oh, Mr. Hardie," she said in a broken voice, and took him, and led him, wonder-struck, stupified, shivering with dark fears, to the room where his crushed daughter lay.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE note Alfred Hardie received on the 10th of April, was from Peggy Black. The letters were well formed, for she had been educated at the national school: but the style was not upon a par.

"MR. ALFRED, SIR,

"Margaret Black sends her respects, and if you want to know the truth about the money, I can tell you all, and where it is at this present time. Sir, I am now in situation at Silverton Grove House about

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a furlong from the station; and if you will be so good to call there and ask for Margaret, I will tell you where it is, which I mean the 14,000*l.*; for it is a sin the young lady should be beguiled of her own. Only you must please come this evening, or else to-morrow before ten o'clock, by reason my mistress and me we are going up to London that day early, and she talk of taking me abroad along with her.

"I remain, Sir,

"Yours respectfully to command,

"MARGARET BLACK.

"If you please, sir, not to show this letter on no account."

Alfred read this twice over, and felt a contemptuous repugnance towards the writer, a cashiered servant, who offered to tell the truth out of spite, having easily resisted every worthy motive. Indeed, I think he would have perhaps dismissed the subject into the fire, but for a strange circumstance that had occurred to him this very afternoon; but I had no opportunity to relate it till now. Well, just as he was going to dress for dinner, he received a visit from Dr. Wycherley, a gentleman he scarcely knew by name. Dr. Wycherley inquired after his kephalalgia; Alfred stared and told him it was much the same; troubled him occasionally.

"And your insomnia."

"I don't know the word: have you any authority for it?"

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Dr. Wycherley smiled with a sort of benevolent superiority, that galled his patient, and proceeded to inquire after his nightly visions and voices. But at this Alfred looked grave as well as surprised and vexed. He was on his guard now, and asked himself seriously what was the meaning of all this, and could his father have been so mad as to talk over his own shame with this stranger: he made no reply whatever.

Dr. Wycherley's curiosity was not of a very ardent kind: for he was one of those who first form an opinion, and then collect the materials of one: and a very little fact goes a long way with such minds. So, when he got no answer about the nocturnal visions and voices, he glided calmly on to another matter. "By-the-by, that 14,000*l.*!"

Alfred started; and then eyed him keenly: "What 14,000*l.*?"

"The fabulous sum you labour under the impression of your father having been guilty of clandestinely appropriating."

This was too much for Alfred's patience: "I don't know who you are, sir," said he; "I never exchanged but three words in my life with you, and do you suppose I will talk to a stranger on family matters of so delicate a kind as this? I begin to think you have intruded yourself on me simply to gratify an impertinent curiosity."

"The hypothesis is at variance with my established character," replied the oleaginous one. "Do

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me the justice to believe in the necessity of this investigation, and that it is one of a most friendly character."

"Then I decline the double nuisance: your curiosity and your friendship! take them both out of my room, sir, or I shall turn them both out by one pair of shoulders."

"You shall smart for this," said the doctor, driven to plain English by anger, that great solvent of circumlocution with which Nature has mercifully supplied us; he made to the door, opened it, and said in considerable excitement to some one outside, "Excited!—Very!"

Now Dr. Pleonast had no sooner been converted to the vernacular, and disappeared, than another stranger entered the room: he had evidently been lurking in the passage: it was a man of smallish stature, singularly gaunt, angular, and haggard, but dressed in a spruce suit of black, tight, new, and glossy. In short, he looked like Romeo's apothecary gone to Stultz with the money. He flattered in with pale cheek and apprehensive body, saying hurriedly, "Now, my *dear* sir, *be* calm: *pray* be calm: I have come down all the way from London to see you, and I am *sure* you won't make me lose my journey; will you now?"

"And pray who asked you to come all the way from London, sir?"

"A person to whom your health is very dear."

"Oh indeed; so I have secret friends, have I?

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Well, you may tell my secret, underhand, *friends*, I never was better in my life."

"I am truly glad to hear it," said the little man: "let me introduce myself; as Dr. Wycherley forgot to do it." And he handed Alfred a card, on which his name and profession were written.

"Well, Mr. Speers," said Alfred, "I have only a moment to give you, for I must dress for dinner. What do you want?"

"I come, sir, in hopes of convincing your friends you are not so very ill; not incurable. Why your eye is steady, your complexion good; a little high with the excitement of this conversation; but, if we can only get over this little delusion, all will be well."

"What little delusion?"

"About the 14,000*l.* you know."

"What 14,000*l.*? I have not mentioned 14,000*l.* to you, have I?"

"No, sir: you seem to shun it like poison; that is the worst of it; you talk about it to others fast enough; but to Dr. Wycherley and myself, who could cure you of it, you would hide all about it, if you could."

At this Alfred rose and put his hands in his pockets and looked down grimly on his inquisitor. "Mr. Speers," said he, "you had better go. There is no credit to be gained by throwing so small an apothecary, as you, out of that window; and *you* won't find it pleasant either; for, if you provoke me to it, I shall not stand upon ceremony; I shan't

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open the window first, as I should for Dr. What's his confounded name."

At these suggestive words, spoken with suppressed ire and flashing eyes, Speers scuttled to the door crabwise, holding the young lion in check, conventionally; to wit with an eye as valiant as a sheep's; and a joyful apothecary was he when he found himself safe outside the house and beside Dr. Wycherley, who was waiting for him.

Alfred soon cooled, and began to laugh at his own anger and the unbounded impudence of his visitors: but, on the other hand, it struck him as a grave circumstance that so able a man as his father should stir muddy water; should go and talk to these strangers about the money he had misappropriated. He puzzled himself all the time he was dressing: and, not to trouble the reader with all the conjectures that passed through his mind, he concluded at last, that Mr. Hardie must feel very strong, very sure there was no evidence against him but his son's, or he would not take the eighth commandment by the horns like this.

"Injustice carries it with a high hand," thought Alfred, with a sigh. He was not the youth to imitate his father's shamelessness: so he locked this last incident in his own breast; did not even mention it to Julia.

But now, on reading Peggy's note, his warlike instincts awoke, and, though he despised his correspondent and her motives, he could not let such a

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chance pass of defeating brazen injustice. It was unfortunate and awkward to have to go to Silverton on his wedding morning; but, after all, there was plenty of time. He packed up his things at once for the wedding tour, and in the morning took them with him in the fly to Silverton: his plan was to come back direct to Albion Villa: so he went to Silverton Grove full dressed, all ready for the wedding.

As it happened he overtook his friend Peterson just outside the town, called to him gaily, and invited him to church and breakfast.

To his surprise the young gentleman replied sullenly that he should certainly not come.

"Not come, old fellow?" said Alfred, hurt.

"You have a good cheek to ask me," retorted the other.

This led to an explanation. Peterson's complaint was that he had told Alfred he was in love with Julia, and Alfred had gone directly and fallen in love with her just to cut him out.

"What are you talking about?" said Alfred: "so this is the reason you have kept away from me of late: why, I was engaged to her at the very time; only my father was keeping us apart."

"Then why didn't you say so?"

"Because my love is not of the prattling sort."

"Oh, nonsense; I don't believe a word of it."

"You don't believe my word! Did you ever know me tell a lie? At that rate think what you please, sir: drive on, Strabo."

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And so ended that little friendship.

On the road our ardent youth arranged in his head a noble scheme. He would bring Peggy Black home with him, compensating her liberally for the place she would thereby lose: would confront her privately with his father, and convince him it was his interest to restore the Dodds their money with a good grace, take the 5000*l.* he had already offered, and countenance the wedding by letting Jane be present at it. It was hard to do all this in the time, but well worth trying for, and not impossible; a two-horse fly is not a slow conveyance, and he offered the man a guinea to drive fast; so that it was not nine o'clock when they reached Silverton Grove House, a place Alfred had never heard of; this, however, I may observe, was no wonder: for it had not borne that name a twelvemonth.

It was a large square mansion of red brick, with stone facings and corners, and with balustrades that hid the garret windows. It stood in its own grounds, and the entrance was through handsome iron gates, one of which was wide open to admit people on foot or horseback. The flyman got down and tried to open the other, but could not manage it. "There, don't waste time," said Alfred impatiently, "let me out."

He found a notice under the bell, "Ring and enter." He rang accordingly, and at the clang the hall-door opened, as if he had pulled a porter along with the bell; and a grey-haired servant out of livery

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stood on the steps to receive him. Alfred hurried across the plat, which was trimmed as neatly as a college green, and asked the servant if he could see Margaret Black.

"Margaret Black?" said the man doubtfully: "I'll inquire, sir. Please to follow me."

They entered a handsome hall, with antlers and armour: from this a double staircase led up to a landing with folding doors in the centre of it; one of these doors was wide open like the iron gate outside. The servant showed Alfred up the left-hand staircase, through the open door, into a spacious drawing-room, handsomely though not gaily furnished and decorated; but a little darkened by Venetian blinds.

The old servant walked gravely on, and on, till Alfred began to think he would butt the wall; but he put his hand out and opened a door, that might very well escape a stranger's notice; for it was covered with looking-glass, and matched another narrow mirror in shape and size: this door led into a very long room, as plain and even sordid as the drawing-room was inviting; the unpapered walls were a cold drab, and wanted washing; there was a thick cob-web up in one corner, and from the ceiling hung the tail of another, which the housemaid's broom had scotched not killed: that side of the room they entered by was all books. The servant said, "Stay here a moment, sir, and I'll send her to you." With this he retired into the drawing-room, closing the

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door softly after him: once closed it became invisible; it fitted like wax, and left nothing to be seen but books; not even a knob. It shut to with that gentle but clean click which a spring bolt, however polished and oiled and gently closed, will emit. Altogether it was enough to give some people a turn. But Alfred's nerves were not to be affected by trifles; he put his hands in his pockets and walked up and down the room, quietly enough at first, but by-and-by uneasily. "Confound her for wasting my time," thought he; "why doesn't she come?"

Then, as he had learned to pick up the fragments of time, and hated dawdling, he went to take a book from the shelves.

He found it was a piece of iron, admirably painted: it chilled his hand with its unexpected coldness: and all the books on and about the door were iron and chilly.

"Well," thought he, "this is the first dummy ever took me in. What a fool the man must be! Why, he could have bought books with ideas in them for the price of these impostors."

Still Peggy did not come. So he went to a door opposite, and at right angles to the farthest window; meaning to open it and inquire after her: lo and behold he found this was a knob without a door. There had been a door but it was blocked up. The only available door on that side had a keyhole, but no latch, nor handle.

Alfred was a prisoner.

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He no sooner found this out than he began to hammer on the door with his fists, and call out.

This had a good effect, for he heard a woman's dress come rustling: a key was inserted, and the door opened. But, instead of Peggy, it was a tall well-formed woman of thirty, with dark grey eyes, and straightish eyebrows massive and black as jet. She was dressed quietly but like a lady. Mrs. Archbold, for that was her name, cast on Alfred one of those swift, all-devouring glances, with which her sex contrive to take in the features, character, and dress of a person from head to foot; and smiled most graciously on him, revealing a fine white set of teeth. She begged him to take a seat; and sat down herself. She had left the door ajar.

"I came to see Margaret Black," said Alfred.

"Margaret Black? There is no such person here," was the quiet reply.

"What, has she gone away so early as this?"

Mrs. Archbold smiled, and said soothingly, "Are you sure she ever existed; except in your imagination?"

Alfred laughed at this, and showed her Peggy's letter. She ran her eye over it, and returned it him with a smile of a different kind, half pitying, half cynical. But presently resuming her former manner, "I remember now," said she in dulcet tones: "the anxiety you are labouring under is about a large sum of money, is it not?"

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"What, can you give me any information about it?" said he, surprised.

"I think we can render you great *service* in the matter, infinite service, Mr. Hardie," was the reply, in a voice of very honey.

Alfred was amazed at this. "You say you don't know Peggy! And yet you seem to know me. I never saw you in my life before, madam; what on earth is the meaning of all this?"

"Calm yourself," said Mrs. Archbold, laying a white and finely moulded hand upon his arm, "there is no wonder nor mystery in the matter: *you were expected.*"

The colour rushed into Alfred's face, and he started to his feet: some vague instinct told him to be gone from this place.

The lady fixed her eyes on him, put her hand to a gold chain that was round her neck, and drew out of her white bosom, not a locket, nor a key, but an ivory whistle; keeping her eye steadily fixed on Alfred, she breathed softly into the whistle. Then two men stepped quietly in at the door; one was a short, stout, snob, with great red whiskers, the other a wiry gentleman with iron-grey hair. The latter spoke to Alfred, and began to coax him. If Mrs. Archbold was honey, this personage was treacle. "Be calm, my dear young gentleman; don't agitate yourself. You have been sent here for your good; and that you may be cured, and so restored to society, and to your anxious and affectionate friends."

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"What are you talking about? what do you mean?" cried Alfred; "are you mad?"

"No, *we* are not," said the short snob, with a coarse laugh.

"Have done with this fooling, then," said Alfred, sharply; "the person I came to see is not here; good morning."

The short man instantly stepped to the door, and put his back to it. The other said, calmly, "No, Mr. Hardie, you cannot leave the house at present."

"Can't I? Why not, pray?" said Alfred, drawing his breath hard: and his eyes began to glitter dangerously.

"We are responsible for your safety; we have force at hand if necessary; pray do not compel us to summon it."

"Why where, in God's name, am I?" said Alfred, panting now; "is this a prison?"

"No, no," said Mrs. Archbold, soothingly; "it is a place where you will be cured of your headaches and your delusions, and subjected to no unnecessary pain nor restraint."

"Oh, bother," said the short snob, brutally. "Why make two bites of a cherry? You are in *my* asylum, young gentleman, and a devilish lucky thing for you."

At this fatal word, "asylum," Alfred uttered a cry of horror and despair, and his eyes roved wildly round the room in search of escape. But the windows of the room, though outside the house they

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seemed to come as low as those of the drawing-room, were partly bricked up within, and made just too high to be reached without a chair. And his captors read that wild glance directly, and the doctor whipped one chair away, while Mrs. Archbold, with more tact, sat quietly down on the other. They all three blew their whistles shrilly.

Alfred uttered an oath and rushed at the door: but heard heavy feet running on stone passages towards the whistles, and felt he had no chance out that way: his dilating eye fell upon the handle of the old defunct door: he made a high leap, came down with his left foot on its knob of brass, and, though of course he could not stand on it, contrived to spring from it slap at the window—Mrs. Archbold screamed—he broke the glass with his shoulder, and tore and kicked the woodwork, and squeezed through on to a stone ledge outside, and stood there bleeding and panting, just as half a dozen keepers burst into the room at his back. He was more than twenty feet from the ground: to leap down was death or mutilation; he saw the flyman driving away. He yelled to him, "Hy! hy! stop! stop!" The flyman stopped and looked round. But soon as he saw who it was, he just grinned: Alfred could see his hideous grin; and there was the rattle of chairs, being brought to the window, and men were mounting softly to secure him; a coarse hand stole towards his ankle; he took a swift step and sprang desperately on to the next ledge:—it was an old manor house,

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and these ledges were nearly a foot broad:—from this one he bounded to the next, and then to a third, the last but one on this side of the building; the corner ledge was but half the size, and offered no safe footing: but close to it he saw the outside leaves of a tree. That tree then must grow close to the corner; could he but get round to it he might yet reach the ground whole. Urged by that terror of a madhouse, which is natural to a sane man, and in England is fed by occasional disclosures, and the general suspicion they excite, he leaped on to a piece of stone no bigger than one's hat, and then whirled himself round into the tree, all eyes to see and claws to grasp.

It was a weeping ash: he could get hold of nothing but soft yielding slivers, that went through his fingers, and so down with him like a bulrush, and souse he went with his hands full of green leaves over head and ears into the water of an enormous iron tank that fed the baths.

The heavy plunge, the sudden cold water, the instant darkness, were appalling: yet, like the fox among the hounds, the gallant young gentleman did not lose heart nor give tongue. He came up gurgling and gasping, and swimming for his life in manly silence: he swam round and round the edge of the huge tank trying in vain to get a hold upon its cold rusty walls. He heard whistles and voices about; they came faint to him where he was, but he knew they could not be very far off.

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Life is sweet. It flashed across him how, a few years before, an university man of great promise had perished miserably in a tank on some Swiss mountain, a tank placed for the comfort of travellers. He lifted his eyes to Heaven in despair, and gave one great sob.

Then he turned upon his back and floated: but he was obliged to paddle with his hands a little to keep up.

A window opened a few feet above him, and a face peered out between the bars.

Then he gave all up for lost, and looked to hear a voice denounce him: but no, the livid face and staring eyes at the window took no notice of him; it was a maniac, whose eyes, bereft of reason, conveyed no images to the sentient brain: only by some half vegetable instinct this darkened man was turning towards the morning sun, and staring it full in the face; Alfred saw the rays strike and sparkle on those glassy orbs, and fire them; yet they never so much as winked. He was appalled yet fascinated by this weird sight; could not take his eyes off it, and shuddered at it in the very water. With such creatures as that he must be confined, or die miserably like a mouse in a basin of water.

He hesitated between two horrors.

Presently his foot struck something, and he found it was a large pipe that entered the tank to the distance of about a foot. This pipe was not more than three feet under water, and Alfred soon con-

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trived to get upon it, and rest his fingers upon the iron edge of the tank. The position was painful: yet so he determined to remain till night; and then, if possible, steal away. Every faculty of mind and body was strung up to defend himself against the wretches who had entrapped him.

He had not been long in this position, when voices approached, and next the shadow of a ladder moved across the wall towards him. The keepers were going to search his pitiable hiding-place. They knew, what he did not, that there was no outlet from the premises: so now, having hunted every other corner and cranny, they came by what is called the exhaustive process of reasoning to this tank; and, when they got near it, something in the appearance of the tree caught the gardener's quick eye. Alfred quaking heard him say, "Look here! He is not far from this."

Another voice said, "Then the Lord have mercy on him; why there's seven foot of water; I measured it last night."

At this Alfred was conscious of a movement and a murmur, that proved humanity was not extinct; and the ladder was fixed close to the tank, and feet came hastily up it.

Alfred despaired.

But, as usual with spirits so quickwitted and resolute, it was but for a moment. "One man in his time plays many animals;" he caught at the words he had heard, and played the game the jackal

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desperate plays in India, the fox in England, the elephant in Ceylon: he feigned death; filled his mouth with water, floated on his back paddling imperceptibly, and half closed his eyes.

He was rewarded by a loud shout of dismay just above his head, and very soon another ladder was placed on the other side, and with ropes and hands he was drawn out and carried down the ladder: he took this opportunity to discharge the water from his mouth; on which a coarse voice said, "Look there! *His* troubles are at an end."

However, they laid him on the grass, and sent for the doctor; then took off his coat, and one of them began to feel his heart to see whether there was any pulsation left; he found it thumping. "Look out," he cried in some alarm; "he's shamming Abraham."

But, before the words were well uttered, Alfred, who was a practised gymnast, bounded off the ground without touching it with his hands, and fled like a deer towards the front of the house; for he remembered the open iron gate: the attendants followed shouting, and whistle answered whistle all over the grounds. Alfred got safe to the iron gate: alas! it had been closed at the first whistle twenty minutes ago. He turned in rage and desperation, and the head keeper, a powerful man, was rushing incautiously upon him. Alfred instantly steadied himself, and with his long arm caught the man in full career a left-handed blow like the kick of a pony, that laid his cheek open and knocked him

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stupid and staggering; he followed it up like lightning with his right, and, throwing his whole weight into this second blow, sent the staggering man to grass; slipped past another, and skirting the south side of the house got to the tank again well in advance of his pursuers, seized the ladder, carried it to the garden wall, and was actually half way up it, and saw the open country and liberty, when the ladder was dragged away and he fell heavily to the ground, and a keeper threw himself bodily on him. Alfred half expected this, and drawing up his foot in time, dashed it furiously in the coming face, actually knocking the man backwards; another kneeled on his chest; Alfred caught him by the throat so felly that he lost all power, and they rolled over and over together, and Alfred got clear and ran for it again, and got on the middle of the lawn, and hallooed to the house:—"Hy! hy! Are there any more sane men imprisoned there? come out, and fight for your lives!" Instantly the open windows were filled with white faces, some grinning, some exulting, all greatly excited; and a hideous uproar shook the whole place —for the poor souls were all sane in their own opinion—and the whole force of attendants, two of them bleeding profusely from his blows, made a cordon and approached him; but he was too cunning to wait to be fairly surrounded; he made his rush at an under-keeper, feinted at his head, caught him a heavy blow in the pit of the stomach, doubled him up in a moment, and off again, leaving the man on

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his knees vomiting and groaning. Several mild maniacs ran out in vast agitation and, to curry favour, offered to help catch him. Vast was their zeal. But, when it came to the point, they only danced wildly about and cried "Stop him! for God's sake stop him! he's ill, dreadfully ill; poor wretch! knock out his brains!" And, whenever he came near them, away they ran whining like kicked curs.

Mrs. Archbold, looking out at a window, advised them all to let him alone, and she would come out and persuade him. But they would not be advised; they chased him about the lawn; but so swift of foot was he, and so long in the reach, that no one of them could stop him, nor indeed come near him, without getting a facer that came like a flash of lightning.

At last, however, they got so well round him, he saw his chance was gone: he took off his hat to Mrs. Archbold at the window, and said quietly, "I surrender to *you*, madam."

At these words they rushed on him rashly; on this he planted two blows right and left, swift as a cat attacked by dogs; administered two fearful black eyes, and instantly folded his arms, saying haughtily, "It was to the lady I yielded, not to you fellows."

They seized him, shook their fists in his face, cursed him, and pinned him; he was quite passive: they handcuffed him, and drove him before them shoving him every now and then roughly by the shoulders. He made no resistance, spoke no word. They took him to the strong-room, and manacled

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his ankles together with an iron hobble, and then strapped them to the bed-posts, and fastened his body down by broad bands of ticking with leathern straps at the ends; and so left him more helpless than a swaddled infant. The hurry and excitement of defence were over, and a cold stupor of misery came down and sat like lead on him. He lay mute as death in his gloomy cell, a tomb within a living tomb. And, as he lay, deeper horror grew and grew in his dilating eyes; gusts of rage swept over him, shook him, and passed; then gusts of despairing tenderness; all came and went, but his bonds. What would his Julia think? If he could only let her know! At this thought he called, he shouted, he begged for a messenger: there was no reply. The cry of a dangerous lunatic from the strong-room was less heeded here than a bark from any dog-kennel in Christendom. "This is my father's doing," he said. "Curse him! Curse him! Curse him!" and his brain seemed on fire, his temples throbbed: he vowed to God to be revenged on his father.

Then he writhed at his own meanness in coming to visit a servant, and his folly in being caught by so shallow an artifice. He groaned aloud. The clock in the hall struck ten. There was just time to get back if they would lend him a conveyance. He shouted, he screamed, he prayed. He offered terms humbly, piteously; he would forgive his father, forgive them all, he would say no more about the money, would do anything, consent to anything, if

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they would only let him keep faith with his Julia: they had better consent, and not provoke his vengeance. "Have mercy on me!" he cried. "Don't make me insult her I love. They will all be waiting for me. It is my wedding-day; you can't have known it is my wedding-day; fiends, monsters, I tell you it is my wedding-day. Oh pray send the lady to me; she can't be all stone, and my misery might melt a stone." He listened for an answer, he prayed for an answer. There was none. Once in a madhouse, the sanest man is mad, however interested and barefaced the motive of the relative who has brought two of the most venal class upon the earth to sign away his wits behind his back; and, once hobbled and strapped, he is a *dangerous* maniac, for just so many days, weeks, or years, as the hobbles handcuffs and jacket happen to be left upon him by inhumanity, economy, or simple carelessness. Poor Alfred's cries and prayers were heard; but no more noticed than the night howl of a wolf on some distant mountain. All was sullen silence, but the grating tongue of the clock, which told the victim of a legislature's shallowness and a father's avarice that Time, deaf to his woe, as were the walls the men the women and the cutting hands, was stealing away with iron finger his last chance of meeting his beloved at the altar.

He closed his eyes, and saw her lovelier than ever, dressed all in white, waiting for him with sweet concern in that peerless face. "Julia! Julia!" he

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cried, with a loud heart-broken cry. The half-hour struck. At that he struggled, he writhed, he bounded: he made the very room shake, and lacerated his flesh; but that was all. No answer. No motion. No help. No hope.

The perspiration rolled down his steaming body. The tears burst from his young eyes and ran down his cheeks. He sobbed, and sobbing almost choked, so tight were his linen bands upon his bursting bosom.

He lay still exhausted.

The clock ticked harshly on: the rest was silence. With this miserable exception; ever and anon the victim's jammed body shuddered so terribly it shook and rattled the iron bedstead, and told of the storm within, the agony of the racked and all foreboding soul.

For then rolled over that young head hours of mortal anguish that no tongue of man can utter, nor pen can shadow. Chained sane amongst the mad; on his wedding-day; expecting with tied hands the sinister acts of the soul-murderers who had the power to make their lie a truth! We can paint the body writhing vainly against its unjust bonds; but who can paint the loathing, agonised, soul in a mental situation so ghastly? For my part I feel it in my heart of hearts; but am impotent to convey it to others; impotent, impotent.

Pray think of it for yourselves, men and women, if you have not *sworn* never to think over a novel. Think of it for your own sakes; Alfred's turn to-day, it may be yours to-morrow.

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CHAPTER XIX.

At two o'clock an attendant stole on tiptoe to the strong-room, unlocked the door, and peeped cautiously in. Seeing the dangerous maniac quiet, he entered with a plate of lukewarm beef and potatoes, and told him bluntly to eat. The crushed one said he could not eat. "You must," said the man. "Eat!" said Alfred; "of what do you think I am made? Pray put it down and listen to me. I'll give you a hundred pounds to let me out of this place; two hundred; three."

A coarse laugh greeted this proposal. "You might as well have made it a thousand when you was about it."

"So I will," said Alfred, eagerly, "and thank you on my knees besides. Ah, I see you don't believe I have money. I give you my honour I have ten thousand pounds: it was settled on me by my grandfather, and I came of age last week."

"Oh, that's like enough," said the man carelessly. "Well, you *are* green. Do you think them as sent you here will let you spend your money? No, your money is theirs now."

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And he sat down with the plate on his knee and began to cut the meat in small pieces; while his careless words entered Alfred's heart, and gave him such a glimpse of sinister motives and dark acts to come as set him shuddering.

"Come, none o' that," said the man, suspecting this shudder; he thought it was the prologue to some desperate act; for all a chained madman does is read upon this plan; his terror passes for rage, his very sobs for snarls.

"Oh, be honest with me," said Alfred imploringly: "do you think it is to steal my money the wretch has stolen my liberty?"

"What wretch?"

"My father."

"I know nothing about it," said the man sullenly: "in course there's mostly money behind, when young gents like you come to be took care of. But you mustn't go thinking of that, or you'll excite yourself again; come, you eat your vittles like a Christian, and no more about it."

"Leave it, that is a good fellow; and then I'll try and eat a little by-and-by. But my grief is great—oh Julia! Julia!—what shall I do? And I am not used to eat at this time. Will you, my good fellow?"

"Well I will, now you behave like a gentleman," said the man.

Then Alfred coaxed him to take off the handcuffs. He refused, but ended by doing it; and so left him.

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Four more leaden hours rolled by, and then this same attendant (his name was Brown) brought him a cup of tea. It was welcome to his parched throat; he drank it, and ate a mouthful of the meat to please the man, and even asked for some more tea.

At eight four keepers came into his room, undressed him, compelled him to make his toilette, &c., before them, which put him to shame—being a gentleman—almost as much as it would a woman: they then hobbled him, and fastened his ankles to the bed, and put his hands into muffles, but did not confine his body; because they had lost a lucrative lodger only a month ago, throttled at night in a strait-waistcoat.

Alfred lay in this plight, and compared with anguish unspeakable his joyful anticipations of this night with the strange and cruel reality. "My wedding night! my wedding night!" he cried aloud, and burst into a passion of grief.

By-and-by he consoled himself a little with the hope that he could not long be incarcerated as a madman, being sane; and his good wit told him his only chance was calmness. He would go to sleep and recover composure to bear his wrongs with dignity, and quietly baffle his enemies.

Just as he was dropping off he felt something crawl over his face. Instinctively he made a violent motion to put his hands up. Both hands were confined, he could not move them. He bounded, he flung, he writhed. His little persecutors were quiet

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a moment, but the next they began again: in vain he rolled and writhed, and shuddered with loathing inexpressible. They crawled, they smelt, they bit.

Many a poor soul these little wretches had distracted with the very sleeplessness the madhouse professed to cure, not create. In conjunction with the opiates, the confinement and the gloom of Silverton House, they had driven many a feeble mind across the line that divides the weak and nervous from the unsound.

When he found there was no help, Alfred clenched his teeth and bore it:—"Bite on, ye little wretches," he said: "bite on, and divert my mind from deeper stings than yours—if you can."

And they did; a little.

Thus passed the night in mental agony, and bodily irritation and disgust. At daybreak the feasters on his flesh retired, and utterly worn out and exhausted he sank into a deep sleep.

At half-past seven the head keeper and three more came in, and made him dress before them. They handcuffed him, and took him down to breakfast in the noisy ward; set him down on a little bench by the wall like a naughty boy, and ordered a dangerous maniac to feed him.

The dangerous maniac obeyed, and went and sat beside Alfred with a basin of thick gruel and a great wooden spoon. He shovelled the gruel down his charge's throat mighty superciliously from the very first; and presently, falling into some favourite

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and absorbing train of thought, he fixed his eye on vacancy and handed the spoonfuls over his left shoulder with such rapidity and recklessness that it was more like sowing than feeding. Alfred cried out, "Quarter! I can't eat so fast as that, old fellow."

Something in his tone struck the maniac; he looked at Alfred full; Alfred looked at him in return, and smiled kindly but sadly.

"Hallo!" cried the maniac.

"What's up now?" said a keeper fiercely.

"Why this man is sane. As sane as I am."

At this there was a horse laugh.

"Saner," persisted the maniac; "for I am a little queer at times, you know."

"And no mistake, Jemmy. Now what makes you think he is sane?"

"Looked me full in the face, and smiled at me."

"Oh, that is your test, is it?"

"Yes it is. You try it on any of those mad beggars there and see if they can stand it."

"Who invented gunpowder?" said one of the insulted persons, looking as sly and malicious as a magpie going to steal.

Jemmy exploded directly: "I did, ye rascal, ye liar, ye rogue, ye Baconian!" and going higher, and higher, and higher in this strain, was very soon handcuffed with Alfred's handcuffs, and seated on Alfred's bench and tied to two rings in the wall.

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On this his martial ardour went down to zero: "Here is treatment, sir," said he piteously to Alfred. "I see you are a gentleman; now look at this. All spite and jealousy; because I invented that invaluable substance, which has done so much to prolong human life and alleviate human misery."

Alfred was now ordered to feed Jemmy; which he did: so quickly were their parts inverted.

Directly after breakfast Alfred demanded to see the proprietor of the asylum.

Answer: Doesn't live here.

The Doctor then.

Oh, he has not come.

This monstrosity irritated Alfred: "Well, then," said he, "whoever it is that rules this den of thieves, when those two are out of it."

"I rule in Mr. Baker's absence," said the head keeper, "and I'll teach you manners, you young blackguard. Handcuff him."

In five minutes Alfred was handcuffed and flung into a padded room.

"Stay there till you know how to speak to your *betters*," said the head keeper.

Alfred walked up and down grinding his teeth with rage for five long hours.

Just before dinner Brown came and took him into a parlour, where Mrs. Archbold was seated writing. Brown retired. The lady finished what she was doing, and kept Alfred standing like a schoolboy going to be lectured. At last she said, "I have

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sent for you to give you a piece of advice: it is to try and make friends with the attendants."

"Me make friends with the scoundrels! I thirst for their lives. Oh, madam, I fear I shall kill somebody here."

"Foolish boy; they are too strong for you. Your worst enemies could wish nothing worse for you than that you should provoke *them*." In saying these words she was so much more kind and womanly that Alfred conceived hopes, and burst out, "Oh, madam, you are human then; you seem to pity me: pray give me pen and paper, and let me write to my friends to get me out of this terrible place; do not refuse me."

Mrs. Archbold resumed her distant manner without apparent effort: she said nothing, but she placed writing materials before him. She then left the room, and locked him in.

He wrote a few hasty ardent words to Julia, telling her how he had been entrapped, but not a word about his sufferings—he was too generous to give her needless pain—and a line to Edward, imploring him to come at once with a lawyer and an honest physician, and liberate him.

Mrs. Archbold returned soon after, and he asked her if she would lend him sealing-wax: "I dare not trust to an envelope in such a place as this," said he. She lent him sealing-wax.

"But how am I to post it?" said he.

"Easily: there is a box in the house; I will show you."

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She took him and showed him the box: he put his letters into it, and in the ardour of his gratitude kissed her hand: she winced a little and said, "Mind, this is not by my advice; I would never tell my friends I had been in a madhouse; oh, never. I would be calm, make friends with the servants—they are the real masters—and never let a creature know where I had been."

"Oh, you don't know my Julia," said Alfred; "she will never desert me, never think the worse of me because I have been entrapped illegally into a madhouse."

"Illegally, Mr. Hardie! you deceive yourself; Mr. Baker told me the order was signed by a relation, and the certificates by first-rate lunacy doctors."

"What on earth has that to do with it, madam, when I am as sane as you are?"

"It has everything to do with it. Mr. Baker could be punished for confining a madman in this house without an order and two certificates; but he couldn't for confining a sane person under an order and two certificates."

Alfred could not believe this, but she convinced him that it was so.

Then he began to fear he should be imprisoned for years: he turned pale, and looked at her so piteously, that to soothe him she told him sane people were never kept in asylums now; they only used to be.

"How can they?" said she. "The London

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asylums are visited four times a year by the commissioners, and the country asylums six times, twice by the commissioners, and four times by the justices. We shall be inspected this week or next; and then you can speak to the justices: mind and be calm; say it is a mistake; offer testimony; and ask either to be discharged at once or to have a commission of lunacy sit on you; ten to one your friends will not face public proceedings: but you *must* begin at the foundation, by making the servants friendly—and by —being calm." She then fixed her large grey eye on him and said, "Now, if I let you dine with me and the first-class patients, will you pledge me your honour to 'be calm;' and not attempt to escape?" Alfred hesitated at that. Her eye dissected his character all the time. "I promise," said he at last with a deep sigh. "May I sit by you? There is something so repugnant in the very idea of mad people."

"Try and remember it is their misfortune, not their crime," said Mrs. Archbold, just like a matronly sister admonishing a brother from school.

She then whistled in a whisper for Brown, who was lurking about unseen all the time. He emerged and walked about with Alfred, and, by-and-by, looking down from a corridor, they saw Mrs. Archbold driving the second-class women before her to dinner like a flock of animals. Whenever one stopped to look at anything, or try and gossip, the philanthropic Archbold went at her just like a shepherd's

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dog at a refractory sheep, caught her by the shoulders, and drove her squeaking headlong.

At dinner Alfred was so fortunate as to sit opposite a gentleman, who nodded and grinned at him all dinner with a horrible leer. He could not, however, enjoy this to the full for a little distraction at his elbow: his right hand neighbour kept forking pieces out of his plate and substituting others from his own; there was even a tendency to gristle in the latter. Alfred remonstrated gently at first; the gentleman forbore a minute, then recommenced; Alfred laid a hand very quietly on his wrist and put it back. Mrs. Archbold's quick eye surprised this gesture: "What is the matter there?" said she.

"Oh, nothing serious, madam," replied Alfred: "only this gentleman does me the honour to prefer the contents of my plate to his own."

"Mr. Cooper!" said the Archbold sternly.

Cooper, the head keeper, pounced on the offender, seized him roughly by the collar, dragged him from the table, knocking his chair down, and bundled him out of the room with ignominy and fracas, in spite of a remonstrance from Alfred, "Oh, don't be so rough with the poor man."

Then the novice laid down his knife and fork, and ate no more. "I am grieved at my own ill nature in complaining of such a trifle," said he when all was quiet.

The company stared considerably at this remark; it seemed to them a most morbid perversion of sensi-

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bility; for the deranged, thin-skinned beyond conception in their own persons, and alive to the shadow of the shade of a wrong, are stoically indifferent to the woes of others.

Though Alfred was quiet as a lamb all day, the attendants returned him to the padded room at night, because he had been there last night; but they only fastened one ankle to the bed-post: so he encountered his Lilliputians on tolerably fair terms —numbers excepted; they swarmed. Unable to sleep, he put out his hand and groped for his clothes. But they were outside the door, according to rule.

Day broke at last: and he took his breakfast quietly with the first-class patients. It consisted of cool tea in small basins instead of cups, and table-spoons instead of tea-spoons; and thick slices of stale bread thinly buttered. A few patients had gruel or porridge instead of tea. After breakfast Alfred sat in the first-class patients' room and counted the minutes and the hours till Edward should come. After dinner he counted the hours till tea-time. Nobody came; and he went to bed in such grief and disappointment as some men live to eighty without ever knowing.

But when two o'clock came next day, and no Edward, and no reply, then the distress of his soul deepened. He implored Mrs. Archbold to tell him what was the cause. She shook her head and said

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gravely, it was but too common; a man's nearest and dearest were very apt to hold aloof from him the moment he was put into an asylum.

Here an old lady put in her word. "Ah, sir, you must not hope to hear from anybody in this place. Why, I have been two years writing and writing, and can't get a line from my own daughter. To be sure she is a fine lady now: but it was her poor neglected mother that pinched and pinched to give her a good education, and that is how she caught a good husband. But it's my belief the post in our hall isn't a real post: but only a box; and I think it is contrived so as the letters fall down a pipe into that Baker's hands, and so then when the postman comes——"

The Archbold bent her bushy brows on this chatty personage. "Be quiet, Mrs. Dent; you are talking nonsense, and exciting yourself: you know you are not to speak on that topic. Take care."

The poor old woman was shut up like a knife; for the Archbold had a way of addressing her own sex that crushed them. The change was almost comically sudden to the mellow tones in which she addressed Alfred the very next moment, on the very same subject: "Mr. Baker, I believe, sees the letters: and, where our poor patients (with a glance at Dent) write in such a way as to wound and perhaps terrify those who are in reality their best friends, they are not always sent. But I conclude *your* letters have gone. If you feel you can be calm,

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why not ask Mr. Baker? He is in the house now; for a wonder."

Alfred promised to be calm; and she got him an interview with Mr. Baker.

He was a full-blown pawnbroker of Silverton town, whom the legislature, with that keen knowledge of human nature which marks the British senate, permitted, and still permits, to speculate in Insanity, stipulating however that the upper servant of all in his asylum should be a doctor; but omitting to provide against the instant dismissal of the said doctor should he go and rob his employer of a lodger —by curing a patient.

As you are not the British legislature, I need not tell you that to this pawnbroker insanity mattered nothing, nor sanity: his trade lay in catching, and keeping, and stinting, as many lodgers, sane or insane, as he could hold.

There are certain formulæ in these quiet retreats, which naturally impose upon greenhorns such as Alfred certainly was, and some visiting justices and lunacy commissioners would seem to be. Baker had been a lodging-house keeper for certified people many years, and knew all the formulæ: some call them dodges: but these must surely be vulgar minds.

Baker worked "the see-saw formula:"

"Letters, young gentleman?" said he: "they are not in my department. They go into the surgery, and are passed by the doctor, except those he examines and orders to be detained."

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Alfred demanded the doctor.

"He is gone," was the reply. (Formula.)

Alfred found it as hard to be calm, as some people find it easy to say the words over the wrongs of others.

The next day, but not till the afternoon, he caught the doctor: "My letters! Surely, sir, you have not been so cruel as to intercept them?"

"I intercept no letters," said the doctor, as if scandalised at the very idea. "I see who writes them, and hand them to Mr. Baker, with now and then a remark. If any are detained, the responsibility rests with him."

"He says it rests with you."

"You must have misunderstood him."

"Not at all, sir. One thing is clear; my letters have been stolen either by him or you; and I will know which."

The doctor parried with a formula.

"You are *excited*, Mr. Hardie. Be calm, sir, be calm: or you will be here all the longer."

All Alfred obtained by this interview was a powerful opiate. The head keeper brought it him in bed. He declined to take it. The man whistled, and the room filled with keepers.

"Now," said Cooper, "down with it, or you'll have to be drenched with this cowhorn."

"You had better take it, sir," said Brown; "the doctor has ordered it you."

"The doctor? Well, let me see the doctor about it."

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"He is gone."

"He never ordered it me," said Alfred. Then fixing his eyes sternly on Cooper, "You miscreants, you want to poison me. No, I will not take it. Murder! murder!"

Then ensued a struggle, on which I draw a veil: but numbers won the day, with the help of handcuffs and a cowhorn.

Brown went and told Mrs. Archbold, and what Alfred had said.

"Don't be alarmed," said that strong-minded lady: "it is only one of the old fool's composing draughts. It will spoil the poor boy's sleep for one night, that is all. Go to him the first thing in the morning."

About midnight Alfred was seized with a violent headache and fever: towards morning he was lightheaded, and Brown found him loud and incoherent: only he returned often to an expression Mr. Brown had never heard before—

"Justifiable parricide. Justifiable parricide. Justifiable parricide."

Most people dislike new phrases. Brown ran to consult Mrs. Archbold about this one. After the delay inseparable from her sex she came in a morning wrapper; and they found Alfred leaning over the bed and bleeding violently at the nose. They were a good deal alarmed, and tried to stop it; but Alfred was quite sensible now, and told them it was doing him good:—

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"I can manage to see now," he said: "a little while ago I was blind with the poison."

They unstrapped his ankle and made him comfortable, and Mrs. Archbold sent Brown for a cup of strong coffee and a glass of brandy. He tossed them off, and soon after fell into a deep sleep that lasted till tea-time. This sleep the poor doctor ascribed to the sedative effect of his opiate. It *was* the natural exhaustion consequent on the morbid excitement caused by his cursed opiate.

"Brown," said Mrs. Archbold, "if Dr. Bailey prescribes again let me know. He shan't square *this* patient with his certificates, whilst I am here."

This was a shrewd, but uncharitable, speech of hers. Dr. Bailey was not such a villain as that.

He was a less depraved, and more dangerous, animal; he was a fool.

The farrago he had administered would have done an excited maniac no good of course, but no great harm. It was dangerous to a sane man: and Alfred to the naked eye was a sane man. But then Bailey had no naked eye left: he had been twenty years an M.D. The certificates of Wycherley and Speers were the green spectacles he wore—very green ones—whenever he looked at Alfred Hardie.

Perhaps in time he will forget those certificates, and, on his spectacles dropping off, he will see Alfred is sane. If he does, he will publish him as one of his most remarkable *cures*.

Meanwhile the whole treatment of this ill-starred

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young gentleman gravitated towards insanity. The inner mind was exasperated by barefaced injustice and oppression; above all, by his letters being stopped; for that convinced him both Baker and Bailey, with their see-saw evasions, knew he was sane, and dreaded a visit from honest, understanding men: and the mind's external organ, the brain, which an asylum professes to soothe, was steadily undermined by artificial sleeplessness. A man can't sleep in irons till he is used to them: and, when Alfred was relieved of these, his sleep was still driven away by biting insects and barking dogs, two opiates provided in many of these placid Retreats, with a view to the permanence, rather than the comfort, of the lodgers.

On the eighth day Alfred succeeded at last in an object he had steadily pursued for some time: he caught the two see-saw humbugs together.

"Now," said he, "*you* say *he* intercepts my letters; and *he* says it is *you* who do it. Which is the truth?"

They were staggered, and he followed up his advantage: "Look me in the face, gentlemen," said he. "Can you pretend you do not know I am sane? Ah, you turn your heads away. You can only tell this barefaced lie behind my back. Do you believe in God, and in a judgment to come? Then, if you cannot release me, at least don't be such scoundrels as to stop my letters, and so swindle me out of a fair trial, an open, public trial."

The doctor parried with a formula. "Publicity

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would be the greatest misfortune could befal you. Pray be calm."

Now, an asylum is a place not entirely exempt from prejudices: and one of them is that any sort of appeal to God Almighty is a sign or else forerunner of maniacal excitement.

These philosophers forget that by stopping letters, evading public trials, and, in a word, cutting off all appeals to human justice, they compel the patient to turn his despairing eyes, and lift his despairing voice to Him, whose eye alone can ever really penetrate these dark abodes.

Accordingly the patient who appealed to God above a whisper in Silverton Grove House used to get soothed directly. And the tranquillising influences employed were morphia, croton oil, or a blister.

The keeper came to Alfred in his room. "Doctor has ordered a blister."

"What for? Send for him directly."

"He is gone."

This way of ordering torture, and then coolly going, irritated Alfred beyond endurance. Though he knew he should soon be powerless, he showed fight; made his mark as usual on a couple of his zealous attendants; but not having room to work in was soon overpowered, hobbled, and handcuffed: then they cut off his hair, and put a large blister on the top of his head.

The obstinate brute declined to go mad. They

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began to respect him for this tenacity of purpose; a decent bedroom was allotted him; his portmanteau and bag were brought him, and he was let walk every day on the lawn with a keeper, only there were no ladders left about, and the trap-door was locked; i.e. the iron gate.

On one of these occasions he heard the gatekeeper whistle three times consecutively; his attendant followed suit, and hurried Alfred into the house, which soon rang with treble signals.

"What is it?" inquired Alfred.

"The visiting justices are in sight: go into your room, please."

"Yes, I'll go," said Alfred, affecting cheerful compliance, and the man ran off.

The whole house was in a furious bustle. All the hobbles, and chains, and instruments of restraint, were hastily collected and bundled out of sight, and clean sheets were being put on many a filthy bed whose occupant had never slept in sheets since he came there, when two justices arrived and were shown into the drawing-room.

During the few minutes they were detained there by Mrs. Archbold, who was mistress of her whole business, quite a new face was put on everything and everybody; ancient cobwebs fell; soap and water explored unwonted territories: the harshest attendants began practising pleasant looks and kind words on the patients, to get into the way of it, so that it might not come too abrupt and startle the patients

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visibly under the visitors' eyes: something like actors working up a factitious sentiment at the wing for the public display, or like a racehorse's preliminary canter. Alfred's heart beat with joy inexpressible. He had only to keep calm, and this was his last day at Silverton Grove. The first thing he did was to make a careful toilet.

The stinginess of relations, and the greed of madhouse proprietors, make many a patient look ten times madder than he is, by means of dress. Clothes wear out in an asylum, and are not always taken off, though Agriculture has long and justly claimed them for her own. And when it is no longer possible to refuse the Reverend Mad Tom or Mrs. Crazy Jane some new raiment, then consanguineous munificence does not go to Poole or Elise, but oftener to paternal or maternal wardrobes, and even to the ancestral chest, the old oak one, singing:

"Poor things, they are out of the world: what need for them to be in the fashion!" (Formula.)

This arrangement keeps the bump of self-esteem down, especially in women, and so co-operates with many other little arrangements to perpetuate the lodger.

Silverton Grove in particular was supplied with the grotesque in dress from an inexhaustible source. Whenever money was sent Baker to buy a patient a suit, he went from his lunacy shop to his pawnbroker's, dived headlong into unredeemed pledges, dressed his patient as gentlemen are dressed to reside

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in cherry trees; and pocketed five hundred per cent on the double transaction. Now Alfred had already observed that many of the patients looked madder than they were—thanks to short trousers and petticoats, holey gloves, ear-cutting shirt-collars, frilled bosoms, shoes made for, and declined by, the very infantry; coats short in the waist and long in the sleeves, coalscuttle bonnets, and grandmaternal caps. So he made his toilet with care, and put his best hat on to hide his shaven crown. He then kept his door ajar, and waited for a chance of speaking to the justices. One soon came; a portly old gentleman, with a rubicund face and honest eye, walked slowly along the corridor, looking as wise as he could, cringed on by Cooper and Dr. Bailey; the latter had arrived post haste, and Baker had been sent for. Alfred came out, touched his hat respectfully, and begged a private interview with the magistrate. The old gentleman bowed politely, for Alfred's dress, address, and countenance, left no suspicion of insanity possible in an unprejudiced mind.

But the doctor whispered in his ear, "Take care, sir. Dangerous!"

Now this is one of the most effective of the formulæ in a private asylum. How can an inexperienced stranger know for certain that such a statement is a falsehood? and even the just do not love justice—to others—quite so well as they love their own skins. So Squire Tollett very naturally declined a private interview with Alfred; and even drew back a step,

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and felt uneasy at being so near him. Alfred implored him not to be imposed upon. "An honest man does not whisper," said he. "Do not let him poison your mind against me; on my honour I am as sane as you are, and he knows it. Pray, pray use your own eyes, and ears, sir, and give yourself a chance of discovering the truth in this stronghold of lies."

"Don't excite yourself, Mr. Hardie," put in the doctor, parentally. (Formula.)

"Don't you interrupt me, doctor; I am as calm as you are. Calmer; for, see, you are pale at this moment; that is with fear that your wickedness in detaining a sane man here is going to be exposed. Oh, sir," said he, turning to the justice, "fear no violence from me, not even angry words; my misery is too deep for irritation, or excitement. I am an Oxford man, sir, a prize man, an Ireland scholar. But, unfortunately for me, my mother left me ten thousand pounds, and a heart. I love a lady whose name I will not pollute by mentioning it in this den of thieves. My father is the well-known banker, bankrupt, and cheat, of Barkington. He has wasted his own money, and now covets his neighbour's and his son's. He had me entrapped here on my wedding-day, to get hold of my money, and rob me of her I love. I appeal to you, sir, to discharge me; or, if you have not so much confidence in your own judgment as to do that, then I demand a commission of lunacy, and a public inquiry."

Dr. Bailey said, "That would be a most unde-

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sirable exposure, both to yourself and your friends." (Formula.)

"It is only the guilty who fear the light, sir," was the swift reply.

Mr. Tollett said he thought the patient had a legal right to a commission of lunacy if there was property, and he took note of the application. He then asked Alfred if he had any complaint to make of the food, the beds, or the attendants.

"Sir," said Alfred, "I leave those complaints to the insane ones: with me the gigantic wrong drives out the petty worries. I cannot feel my stings for my deep wound."

"Oh, then, you admit you are not treated *unkindly* here?"

"I admit nothing of the kind, sir. I merely decline to encumber your memory with petty injuries, when you are good enough to inquire into a monstrous one."

"Now that is very sensible and considerate," said Mr. Tollett. "I will see you, sir, again before we leave."

With this promise Alfred was obliged to be content. He retired respectfully, and the justice said, "He seems as sane as I am." The doctor smiled. The justice observed it, and not aware that this smile was a formula, as much so as a prize-fighter's or a ballet-dancer's, began to doubt a little: he reflected a moment, then asked who had signed the certificates.

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"Dr. Wycherley for one."

"Dr. Wycherley? that is a great authority."

"One of the greatest in the country, sir."

"Oh, then one would think he must be more or less deranged."

"Dangerously so at times. But in his lucid intervals you never saw a more quiet gentlemanly creature." (Formula.)

"How sad!"

"Very. He is my most interesting patient (formula), though terribly violent at times. Would you like to see the medical journal about him?"

"Yes; by-and-by."

The inspection then continued; the inspector admired the clean sheets that covered the beds, all of them dirty, some filthy; and asked the more reasonable patients to speak freely and say if they had any complaint to make. This question being with the usual sagacity of public inspectors put in the presence of Cooper and the doctor, who stuck to Tollett like wax, the mad people all declared they were very kindly treated: the reason they were so unanimous was this; they knew by experience that, if they told the truth, the justices could not at once remedy their discomforts, whereas the keepers, the very moment the justices left the house, would knock them down, beat them, shake them, strait-jacket them, and starve them: and the doctor, less merciful, would doctor them. So they shook in their shoes, and vowed they were very comfortable in Silverton Grove.

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Thus, in later days, certain Commissioners of Lunacy inspecting Accomb House, extracted nothing from Mrs. Turner, but that she was happy and comfortable under the benignant sway of Metcalf the mild—there present. It was only by a miracle the public learned the truth; and miracles are rare.

Meantime, Alfred had a misgiving. The plausible doctor had now Squire Tollett's ear, and Tollett was old, and something about him reminded the Oxonian of a trait his friend Horace had detected in old age:

> Vel quòd res omnes timidè gelidè que ministrat.
> Dilator, spe longus, iners, &c.

He knew there was another justice in the house, but he knew also he should not be allowed to get speech with him, if by cunning or force it could be prevented. He kept his door ajar. Presently Nurse Hannah came bustling along with an apronful of things, and let herself into a vacant room hard by. This Hannah was a young woman with a pretty and rather babyish face, diversified by a thick biceps muscle in her arm that a blacksmith need not have blushed for. And I suspect it was this masculine charm, and not her feminine features, that had won her the confidence of Baker and Co., and the respect of his female patients; big or little, excited or not excited, there was not one of them this bicipital baby-face could not pin by the wrists, and twist her helpless into a strong-room, or handcuff her unaided in a moment; and she did it too on slight

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provocation. Nurse Hannah seldom came into Alfred's part of the house; but, when she did meet him, she generally gave him a kind look in passing; and he had resolved to speak to her, and try if he could touch her conscience, or move her pity. He saw what she was at, but was too politic to detect her openly and irritate her. He drew back a step, and said softly, "Nurse Hannah! Are you there?"

"Yes, I am here," said she sharply, and came out of the room hastily; and shut it. "What do you want, sir?"

Alfred clasped his hands together. "If you are a woman, have pity on me.

She was taken by surprise. "What can I do?" said she in some agitation. "I am only a servant."

"At least tell me where I can find the Visiting Justice, before the keepers stop me."

"Hush! Speak lower," said Hannah. "You *have* complained to one, haven't you?"

"Yes. But he seems a feeble old fogy. Where is the other? Oh, pray tell me."

"I mustn't; I mustn't. In the noisy ward. There, run."

And run he did.

Alfred was lucky enough to get safe into the noisy ward without being intercepted. And then he encountered a sunburnt gentleman, under thirty, in a riding-coat, with a hunting-whip in his hand: it was Mr. Vane, a Tory squire and large landholder in the county.

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Now, as Alfred entered at one door, Baker himself came in at the other, and they nearly met at Vane. But Alfred saluted him first, and begged respectfully for an interview.

"Certainly, sir," said Mr. Vane.

"Take care, sir; he is dangerous," whispered Baker. Instantly Mr. Vane's countenance changed. But this time Alfred overheard the formula, and said quietly: "Don't believe him, sir. I am not dangerous; I am as sane as any man in England. Pray examine me, and judge for yourself."

"Ah, that is his delusion," said Baker. "Come, Mr. Hardie, I allow you great liberties, but you abuse them. You really must not monopolise his Worship with your fancies. Consider, sir, you are not the only patient he has to examine."

Alfred's heart sank; he turned a look of silent agony on Mr. Vane.

Mr. Vane, either touched by that look, or irritated by Baker's pragmatical interference, or perhaps both, looked that person coolly in the face, and said sternly: "Hold your tongue, sir; and let *the gentleman* speak to me."

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CHAPTER XX.

ALFRED thus encouraged told his story with forced calmness, and without a word too much. Indeed, so clear and telling was the narrative, and the logic so close, that incoherent patients one or two stole up and listened with wonder and a certain dreamy complacency; the bulk, however, held aloof apathetic; being inextricably wrapped in fictitious Autobiography.

His story told, Alfred offered the Dodds in evidence that the fourteen thousand pounds was no illusion; and referred to his sister and several friends as witnesses to his sanity, and said the letters he wrote were all stopped in the asylum; and why? That no honest man or woman might know where he was.

He ended by convincing Mr. Vane he was a sane and injured man, and his father a dark designing person.

Mr. Vane asked him whether he had any other revelations to make. Alfred replied, "Not on my own account, but for the sake of those afflicted persons who are here for life. Well, the beds want repaving; the vermin thinning; the instruments of

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torture want abolishing, instead of hiding for an hour or two when you happen to come: what do the patients gain by that? The madmen dare not complain to you, sir; because the last time one did complain to the justices (it was Mr. Petworth), they had no sooner passed through the iron gate, than Cooper made an example of him; felled him with his fist, and walked up and down him on his knees, crying, 'I'll teach you to complain to the justices.' But one or two gentlemanly madmen, who soon found out that I am not one of *them*, have complained to *me* that the attendants wash them too much like Hanson cabs, strip them naked, and mop them on the flag-stones, then fling on their clothes without drying them. They say, too, that the meat is tough and often putrid, the bread stale, the butter rancid, the vegetables stinted, since they can't be adulterated; and as for sleep it is hardly known; for the beds are so short your feet stick out; insects, without a name to ears polite, but highly odoriferous and profoundly carnivorous, bite you all night; and dogs howl eternally outside; and, when exhausted nature defies even these enemies of rest, then the doctor, who seems to be in the pay of Insanity, claps you on a blister by brute force, and so drives away sleep, Insanity's cure, or hocuses you by brute force as he did me, and so steals your sleep, and tries to steal your reason, with his opium, henbane, morphia, and other tremendous brain-stealers. With such a potion, sir, administered by violence, he gave me in one

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night a burning fever, headache, loss of sight, and bleeding at the nose; as Mrs. Archbold will tell you. Oh, look into these things, sir, in pity to those whom Heaven has afflicted: to me they are but strokes with a feather; I am a sane man torn from love and happiness, and confined among the mad; discomfort is nothing to me; comfort is nothing; you can do nothing for me but restore me to my dignity as a man, my liberty as a Briton, and the rights as a citizen I have been swindled out of by a fraudulent bankrupt and his tools two venal doctors, who never saw me but for one five minutes, but came to me ready bribed at a guinea apiece, and so signed away my wits behind my back."

"Now, Mr. Baker," said Vane, "what do you say to all this?"

Baker smiled with admirable composure, and replied with crafty moderation, "He is a gentleman, and believes every word he says; but it is all his delusions. Why, to begin, sir, his father has nothing to do with putting him in here; nothing on earth. (Alfred started; then smiled incredulous.) And, in the next place, there are no instruments of restraint here, but two pair of handcuffs and two strait-jackets, and these never hardly used; we trust to the padded rooms, you know. And, sir," said he, getting warm, which instantly affected his pronunciation, "if there's a hinsect in the ouse, I'll heat im."

Delusion is a big word, especially in a mad-house; it overpowers a visitor's understanding. Mr. Vane was

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staggered. Alfred, whose eager eyes were never off his face, saw this with dismay, and feeling that, if he failed in the simpler matter, he should be sure to fail in establishing his sanity, he said with inward anxiety, though with outward calmness, "Suppose we test these delusions?"

"With all my heart," said Vane.

Baker's countenance fell.

"Begin with the instruments of restraint. Find me them."

Baker's countenance brightened up; he had no fear of their being found.

"I will," said Alfred; "please to follow me."

Baker grinned with anticipated triumph.

Alfred led the way to a bedroom near his own; and asked Mr. Baker to unlock it. Baker had not the key; no more had Cooper; the latter was sent for it; he returned, saying the key was mislaid.

"That I expected," said Alfred. "Send for the kitchen poker, sir; I'll soon unlock it."

"Fetch the kitchen poker," said Vane.

"Good gracious! sir," said Cooper; "he only wants that to knock all our brains out. You have no idea of his strength and ferocity."

"Well lied, Cooper," said Alfred, ironically.

"Fetch *me* the poker," said Vane.

Cooper went for it; and came back with the key instead.

The door was opened, and they all entered. Alfred looked under the bed. The rest stood round it.

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There was nothing to be seen but a year's dust.

Alfred was dumb-foundered, and a cold perspiration began to gather on his brow. He saw at once a false move would be fatal to him.

"Well, sir," said Vane, grimly. "Where are they?"

Alfred caught sight of a small cupboard; he searched it; it was empty. Baker and Cooper grinned at his delusion, quietly, but so that Vane might see that formula. Alfred returned to the bed and shook it. Cooper and Baker left off grinning; Alfred's quick eye caught this, and he shook the bed violently, furiously.

"Ah!" said Mr. Vane, "I hear a chink."

"It is an iron bedstead, and old," suggested Baker.

Alfred tore off the bed-clothes, and then the mattress. Below the latter was a framework, and below the framework a receptacle about six inches deep, five feet long, and three broad, filled with chains, iron belts, wrist locks, muffles, and screw-locked hobbles, &c.; a regular Inquisition.

If Baker had descended from the Kemble family, instead of rising from nothing, he could not have acted better. "Good Heavens!" cried he, "where do these come from? They must have been left here by the last proprietor."

Vane replied only by a look of contempt, and ordered Cooper to go and ask Mr. Tollett to come to him.

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Alfred improved the interval. "Sir," said he, "all my delusions, fairly tested, will turn out like this."

"They *shall* be tested, sir; I give you my word."

Mr. Tollett came, and the two justices commenced a genuine scrutiny; their first. They went now upon the true method, in which all these dark places ought to be inspected. They did not believe a word; they suspected everything; they examined patients apart, detected cruelty filth and vermin under philanthropic phrases and clean linen; and the upshot was they reprimanded Baker and the attendants severely, and told him his licence should never be renewed, unless at their next visit the whole asylum was reformed. They ordered all the iron body-belts, chains, leg-locks, wrist-locks, and muffs, to be put into Mr. Tollett's carriage, and concluded a long inspection by inquiring into Alfred's sanity: at this inquiry they did not allow Baker to be even present, but only Dr. Bailey.

First they read the order; and found it really was not Alfred's father who had put him into the asylum. Then they read the certificates, especially Wycherley's; it accused Alfred of headache, insomnia, nightly visions, a rooted delusion (pecuniary), a sudden aversion to an affectionate father; and at the doctor's last visit, a wild look (formula), great excitement, and threats of violence without any provocation to justify them. This overpowered the worthy squires' understandings, to begin. But they pro-

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ceeded to examine the three books an asylum has to keep by law; the visiter's book, the case book, and the medical journal. All these were kept with the utmost looseness in Silverton House; as indeed they are in the very best of these places. However, by combining the scanty notices in the several books, they arrived at this total.

"Admitted April 11. Had a very wild look, and was much excited. Attempted suicide by throwing himself into a tank. Attacked the keepers, for rescuing him, with prodigious strength and violence. Refused food.

And some days after came an entry with his initials instead of his name, which was contrary to law. "A. H. Much excited. Threats. Ordered composing draught."

And a day or two after: "A. H. Excited. Blasphemous. Ordered blister."

The first entry, however, was enough. The doctor had but seen real facts through his green spectacles, and lo! "suicide," "homicide," and "refusal of food," three cardinal points of true mania.

Mr. Vane asked Dr. Bailey whether he was better since he came.

"Oh, infinitely better," said Dr. Bailey. "We hope to cure him in a month or two."

They then sent for Mrs. Archbold, and had a long talk with her, recommending Alfred to her especial care: and, having acted on his judgment and information in the teeth of those who called him insane,

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turned tail at a doctor's certificate; distrusted their eyesight at an unsworn affidavit.

Alfred was packing up his things to go away; bright as a lark. Mrs. Archbold came to him, and told him she had orders to give him every comfort; and the justices hoped to liberate him at their next visit.

The poor wretch turned pale. "At their next visit!" he cried. "What, not to-day? When is their next visit?"

Mrs. Archbold hesitated: but at last she said, "Why you know; I told you; they come four times every year."

The disappointment was too bitter. The contemptible result of all his patience, self-command, and success, was too heartbreaking. He groaned aloud. "And you can come with a smile and tell me that; you cruel woman." Then he broke down altogether and burst out crying. "You were born without a heart," he sobbed.

Mrs. Archbold quivered at that. "I wish I had been," said she, in a strange, soft, moving voice; then, casting an eloquent look of reproach on him, she went away in visible agitation, and left him sobbing. Once out of his sight she rushed into another room, and there, taking no more notice of a gentle madwoman its occupant than of the bed or the table, she sank into a chair, and, throwing her head back with womanly abandon, laid her hand upon her bosom that heaved tempestuously.

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And soon the tears trickled out of her imperious eyes, and ran unrestrained.

The mind of Edith Archbold corresponded with her powerful frame, and bushy brows. Inside this woman all was vigour; strong passions, strong good sense to check or hide them; strong will to carry them out. And between these mental forces a powerful struggle was raging. She was almost impenetrable to mere personal beauty, and inclined to despise early youth in the other sex; and six months spent with Alfred in a quiet country house would probably have left her reasonably indifferent to him. But the first day she saw him in Silverton House he broke through her guard, and pierced at once to her depths; first he terrified her by darting through the window to escape: and terror is a passion. So is pity; and never in her life had she overflowed with it as when she saw him drawn out of the tank and laid on the grass. If, after all, he was as sane as he looked, that brave high-spirited young creature, who preferred death to the touch of coarse confining hands!

No sooner had he filled her with dismay and pity, than he bounded from the ground before her eyes and fled: she screamed, and hoped he would escape; she could not help it. Next she saw him fighting alone against seven or eight, and with unheard-of prowess almost beating them. She sat at the window panting, with clenched teeth and hands, and wished him to beat, and admired him, wondered at him.

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He yielded, but not to them: to her. All the compliments she had ever received were tame compared with this one. It thrilled her vanity. He was like the men she had read of, and never seen; the young knights of chivalry. She glowed all over at him, and detecting herself in time was frightened. Her strong good sense warned her to beware of this youth, who was nine years her junior yet had stirred her to all her depths in an hour; and not to see him nor think of him too much. Accordingly she kept clear of him altogether at first. Pity soon put an end to that; and she protected and advised him, but with a cold and lofty demeanour put on express. What with her kind acts and her cold manner he did not know what to make of her; and often turned puzzled earnest eyes upon her, as much as to say are you really my friend or not? Once she forgot herself and smiled so tenderly in answer to these imploring eyes, that his hopes rose very high indeed. He flattered himself she would let him out of the asylum before long. That was all Julia's true lover thought of.

A feeling hidden, and not suppressed, often grows fast in a vigorous nature. Mrs. Archbold's fancy for Alfred was subjected to this dangerous treatment; and it smouldered, and smouldered, till from a penchant it warmed to a fancy, from a fancy to a passion. But penchant, fancy, or passion, she hid it with such cunning and resolution, that neither Alfred nor even those of her own sex saw it; nor did a

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creature even suspect it, except Nurse Hannah; but her eyes were sharpened by jealousy, for that muscular young virgin was beginning to sigh for him herself, with a gentle timidity that contrasted prettily with her biceps muscle and prowess against her own sex.

Mrs. Archbold had more passion than tenderness, but what woman is not to be surprised and softened? When her young favourite, the greatest fighter she had ever seen, broke down at the end of his gallant effort and began to cry like a girl, her bowels of compassion yearned within her, and she longed to cry with him. She only saved herself from some imprudence by flight, and had her cry alone. After a flow of tears such a woman is invincible; she treated Alfred at tea-time with remarkable coldness and reserve. This piece of acting led to unlooked-for consequences: it emboldened Cooper, who was raging against Alfred for telling the justices, but had forborne from violence, for fear of getting the house into a fresh scrape. He now went to the doctor, and asked for a powerful drastic; Bailey gave him two pills, or rather boluses, containing croton-oil—inter alia; for Bailey was one of the *farraginous* fools of the unscientific science. Armed with this weapon of destruction, Cooper entered Alfred's bedroom at night, and ordered him to take them: he refused. Cooper whistled, and four attendants came. Alfred knew he should soon be powerless; he lost no time, sprang at Cooper, and with his long arm landed a

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blow that knocked him against the wall, and in this position, where his body could not give, struck him again with his whole soul, and cut his cheek right open. The next minute he was pinned, handcuffed, and in a strait-jacket, after crippling one assailant with a kick on the knee.

Cooper, half stunned, and bleeding like a pig, recovered himself now, and burned for revenge. He uttered a frightful oath, and jumped on Alfred as he lay bound and powerless, and gave him a lesson he never forgot.

Every art has its secrets: the attendants in such madhouses as this have been for years possessed of one they are too modest to reveal to justices, commissioners, or the public: the art of breaking a man's ribs, or breast-bone, or both, without bruising him externally. The convicts at Toulon arrive at a similar result by another branch of the art; they stuff the skin of a conger eel with powdered stone; then give the obnoxious person a sly crack with it; and a rib or backbone is broken with no contusion to mark the external violence used. But Mr. Cooper and his fellows do their work with the knee-joint: it is round, and leaves no bruise. They subdue the patient by walking up and down him on their knees. If they don't jump on him, as well as promenade him, the man's spirit is often the only thing broken; if they do, the man is apt to be broken bodily as well as mentally. Thus died Mr. Sizer in 1854, and two others quite recently. And how many more

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God only knows; we can't count the stones at the bottom of a dark well.

Cooper then sprang furiously on Alfred, and went kneeling up and down him. Cooper was a heavy man, and his weight crushed and hurt the victim's legs; but that was a trifle; as often as he kneeled on Alfred's chest, the crushed one's whole framework seemed giving way, and he could scarcely breathe. Cooper warmed to his work, and kneeled hard on Alfred's face. Then Cooper jumped knees downwards on his face. Then Cooper drew back and jumped savagely on his chest. Then Alfred felt his last hour was come: he writhed aside, and Cooper missed him this time and overbalanced himself; the two faces came together for a moment, and Alfred, fighting for his life, caught Cooper with his teeth by the middle of the nose, and bit clean through the cartilage with a shrill snarl. Then Cooper shrieked, and writhed, and whirled his great arms like a windmill, punching at Alfred's head. Now man is an animal at bottom, and a wild animal at the very bottom. Alfred ground his teeth together in bull-dog silence till they quite met, and with his young strong neck and his despair shook that great hulking fellow as a terrier shakes a cat, still grinding his teeth together in bull-dog silence. The men struck him, shook him, in vain. At last they got hold of his throat and choked him, and so parted the furious creatures: but not before Mrs. Archbold and nurses Jane and Hannah had rushed into the room, drawn

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by Cooper's cries. The first thing the new comers did was to scream in unison at the sight that met them. On the bed lay Alfred all but insensible, his linen and his pale face spotted with his persecutor's blood. Upon him kneeled the gory ruffian swearing oaths to set the hair on end.

"I'll stop your biting for ever," said he, and raised a ponderous fist: and in one moment more Alfred would have been disfigured for life, but Brown caught Cooper's arm, and Mrs. Archbold said sharply to the nurses "Handcuffs!" and the three women pinned him simultaneously, and, taking him half by surprise, handcuffed him in a moment with a strength, sharpness, skill, and determination not to be found in women out of a madhouse—luckily for the newspaper husbands.

The other keepers looked astounded at this masterstroke; but, as no servant had ever affronted Mrs. Archbold without being dismissed directly, they took their cue and said, "We advised him, ma'am, but he would not listen to us."

"Cooper," said Mrs. Archbold as soon as she recovered her breath, "you are not fit for your place. To-morrow you go, or I go."

Cooper, cowed in a moment by the handcuffs, began to whine and say that it was all Alfred's fault. "Look at my nose."

But Mrs. Archbold was now carried away by two passions instead of one, and they were together too much for prudence; she took a handful of glossy

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locks out of her bosom and shook them in Cooper's face:

"You monster!" said she; "you should go, for *that*, if you were my own brother."

The two young nurses assented loudly, and turned and cackled at Cooper for cutting off such lovely hair.

He shrugged his shoulders at them, and said sulkily to Mrs. Archbold, "Oh, I didn't know. Of course, if you have fallen in love with him, my cake is burnt. 'Tisn't the first lunatic you have taken for your fancy man."

At this brutal speech, all the more intolerable for not being quite false, Mrs. Archbold turned ashy pale and looked round for a weapon to strike him dead; but found none so handy and so deadly as her tongue.

"It's not the first you have tried to MURDER," said she. "I know all about that death in Calton Retreat: you kept it dark before the coroner, but it is not too late, I'll open the world's eyes; I was only going to dismiss you, sir: but you have insulted me. I'll hang you in reply."

Cooper turned very pale and was silent; his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth.

But a feeble, unexpected, voice issued from the bed and murmured cheerfully, though with some difficulty, a single word:

"Justice!"

At an expression so out of place they all started with surprise.

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Alfred went on: "You are putting the saddle on the wrong horse. The fault lies with those villains Baker and Bailey. Cooper is only a servant, you know, and obeys orders."

"What business had the wretch to cut your hair off?" said Mrs. Archbold, turning on Alfred with flashing eyes. Her blood once up, she was ready to quarrel even with him for taking part against himself.

"Because he was ordered to put on a blister, and hair must come off before a blister can go on," replied Alfred soberly.

"That is no excuse for him beating you and trying to break your front teeth."

She didn't mind so much about his side ribs.

"No," replied Alfred. "But I hit him first. And then I bit him, like an Irish savage: look at the bloke's face! Dear Mrs. Archbold, you are my best friend in this horrid place, and you have beautiful eyes, and, talk of teeth, look at yours! but you haven't much sense of justice: forgive me for saying so. Put the proposition into signs; there is nothing like that for clearing away prejudice. B. and C. have a scrimmage: B. begins it, C. gets the worst of it; in comes A. and turns away—C. Is that justice? It is me you ought to turn away; and I wish to Heaven you would: dear Mrs. Archbold, do pray turn me away, and keep the other blackguard."

At this extraordinary and, if I may be allowed the expression, Alfredian speech, the men first

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stared, and then laughed; the women smiled, and then were nearer crying than laughing.

And so it was, that justice handcuffed, straitjacketed, blistered, and impartial, sent from its bed of torture a beam through Cooper's tough hide to his inner heart. He hung his head and stepped towards Alfred: "You're what I call a man," he said. "I don't care a curse whether I stay or go, after what she has said to me. But, come what may, you're a gentleman, and one as can put hisself in a poor man's place. Why, sir, I wasn't always so rough; but I have been twenty years at it; and mad folk they'd wear the patience out of Jove, and the milk of human kindness out of saints and opossums. However, if I was to stay here all my life, instead of going to-morrow, I'd never lift hand to trouble you again, for you taking my part again yourself like that."

"I'll put that to the test," said Mrs. Archbold sharply. "Stay—on your probation. Hannah!"

And Baby-face biceps at a look took off his handcuffs; which she had been prominent in putting on.

This extraordinary scene ended in the men being dismissed, and the women remaining and going to work after their kind.

"The bed is too short for one thing," said Hannah. "Look at his poor feet sticking out, and cold as a stone: just feel of them, Jane."

"No, no; murder!" cried Alfred; "that tickles."

Hannah ran for a chair, Jane for another pillow.

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Mrs. Archbold took off his handcuffs, and, passing her hand softly and caressingly over his head, lamented the loss of his poor hair. Amongst them they relieved him of his strait-jacket, set up his head, covered his feet, and he slept like a top for want of drastics and opiates, and in spite of some brilliant charges by the Lilliputian cavalry.

After this the attendants never molested Alfred again; nor did the doctor; for Mrs. Archbold got his boluses, and sent them up to a famous analysing chemist in London, and told him she had; and said, "I'll thank you not to prescribe at random for *that* patient any more." He took the lady's prescription, coming as it did in a voice quietly grim, and with a momentary but wicked glance shot from under her black brows.

Alfred was all the more miserable at his confinement: his melancholy deepened now there was no fighting to excite him. A handsome bright young face clouded with sadness is very pitiable, and I need not say that both the women who had fallen in love with him had their eyes, or at least the tails of their eyes, for ever on his face. The result varied with the characters of the watchers. That young face, ever sad, made Mrs. Archbold sigh, and long to make him happy under her wing. How it wrought on the purer and more womanly Hannah will be revealed by the incident I have to relate. Alfred was sitting on a bench in the corridor, bowed down by grief, and the Archbold lurking in a room hard

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by, feasting her eyes on him through an aperture in the door caused by the inspection plate being under repair—when an erotic maniac was driven past. She had obtained access—with marvellous cunning—to the men's side; but was now coming back with a flea in her ear, and faster than she went; being handcuffed and propelled by Baby-face biceps. On passing the disconsolate Alfred the latter eyed him coyly, gave her stray sheep a coarse push—as one pushes a *thing*—and laid a timid hand, gentle as falling down, upon the rougher sex. Contrast sudden and funny.

"Don't be so sad, sir," she murmured, cooing like the gentlest of doves. "I can't bear to see you look like that."

Alfred looked up, and met her full with his mournful honest eyes. "Ah, Hannah, how can I be anything but sad, imprisoned here, same amongst the mad?"

"Well, and so am I, sir: so is Mrs. Archbold herself."

"Ay, but you have not been entrapped, imprisoned, on your wedding-day. I cannot even get a word sent to my Julia, my wife that ought to be. Only think of the affront they have made me put on her I love better, ten times better, than myself. Why, she must have been waiting for me; humiliated perhaps by my absence. What will she think of me? The rogues will tell her a thousand lies: she is very high spirited, Hannah, impetuous like

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myself, only so gentle and so good; oh, my angel; my angel; I shall lose you for ever."

Hannah clasped her hands, with tears in her eyes: "No, no," she cried; "it is a burning shame to part true lovers like you and her. Hush! speak low. Brown told me you are as well as he is."

"God bless him for it, then."

"You have got money, they say: try it on with Brown."

"I will. Oh you darling. What is the matter?"

For Baby-face was beginning to whimper.

"Oh, nothing, sir; only you are so glad to go; and we shall be sorry to part with you: but you won't care for that—oh! oh! oh!"

"What, do you think I shall forget you and your kindness? Never: I'll square accounts with friends and foes; not one shall be forgotten."

"Don't offer me any of your money," sobbed Hannah, "for I wouldn't touch it. Good-bye," said she: "I shan't have as much as a kiss for it, I'll be bound: good-bye," said she again, and never moved.

"Oh, won't you, though," cried Alfred gaily. "What is that? and that? and that? Now, what on earth are you crying about? Dry your tears, you dear good-hearted girl: no, I'll dry them for you."

He took out white handkerchief and dried her cheeks gently for her, and gave her a parting kiss; but the Archbold's patience was exhausted; a door

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opened nearly opposite, and there she stood yellow with jealousy and sombre as night with her ebon brows. At sight of this lowering figure Hannah uttered a squawk, and fled with cheeks red as fire. Alfred, not aware of Mrs. Archbold's smouldering passion, and little dreaming that jealous anguish and rage stood incarnate before him, burst out laughing like a mischievous boy; on this she swept upon him, and took him by both shoulders, and awed him with her lowering brows close to his. "You ungrateful wretch," she said violently, and panted.

His colour rose. "Ungrateful? That I am not, madam. Why do you call me so?"

"You are; you are. What have I done to you that you run from me to the very servants? However, she shall be packed off this very night, and you to thank for it."

This was the way to wound the generous youth. "Now it is you that are ungenerous," he said. "What harm has the poor girl done? She had a virtuous movement, and pitied me for the heartless fraud I suffer by; that is all. Pray do you never pity me?"

"Was it this virtuous movement set her kissing you?" said the Archbold, clenching her teeth as if the word stung her, like the sight.

"She didn't, now," said Alfred; "it was I kissed her."

"And yet you pretend to love your Julia so truly?"

"This is no place for that sacred name, madam.

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But be sure I have no secrets from her, and kiss nobody she would not kiss herself."

"She must be a very accommodating young lady."

At this insult Alfred rose pale with anger, and was about to defy his monitor mortally; but the quick-witted woman saw and disarmed him; in one moment, before ever he could speak, she was a transformed creature, a penitent; she put her hands together supplicatingly, and murmured,

"I didn't mean it; I respect *her;* and your love for her: forgive me, Alfred: I am so unhappy, oh forgive me."

And behold she held his hand between her soft, burning palms, and her proud head sank languidly on his shoulder, and the inevitable tears ran gently.

Morals apart, it was glorious love-making.

"Bother the woman," thought Alfred.

"Promise me not to do it again," she murmured, "and the girl shall stay."

"Oh, lord, yes, I promise; though I can't see what it matters to you."

"Not much, cruel boy, alas! But it matters to her; for——" She kissed Alfred's hand gently and rose to her feet and moved away, but at the second step turned her head sudden as a bird and finished her sentence—"if you kiss her before me, I shall kill her before you."

Here was a fresh complication! The men had left off blistering, torturing, and bullying him; but his guardian angels, the women, were turning up

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their sleeves to pull caps over him, and plenty of the random scratches would fall on him. If anything could have made him pine more to be out of the horrid place, this voluptuous prospect would. He hunted everywhere for Brown. But he was away the day with a patient. At night he lay awake for a long time, thinking how he should open the negotiation: he shrank from it. He felt a delicacy about bribing Beelzebub's servant to betray him.

As Hannah had originated the idea, he thought he might very well ask her to do the dirty work of bribing Brown, and he would pay her for it; only in money, not kisses. With this resolution he sank to sleep; and his spirit broke prison: he stood with Julia before the altar, and the priest made them one. Then the church and the company and daylight disappeared, and her own sweet low moving voice came thrilling, "My own, own, own," she murmured, "I love you ten times more for all you have endured for me;" and with this her sweet lips settled on his like the dew.

Impartial sleep flies at the steps of the scaffold and the gate of Elysium: so Alfred awoke at the above. But doubted whether he was quite awake; for two lips were touching his. He stirred, and somebody was gone like the wind, with a rustle of flying petticoats, and his door shut in a moment; it closed with a catch-lock; his dastardly assailant had opened it with her key, and left it open to make good her retreat if he should awake while she was

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stealing what she came after. Alfred sat up in bed indignant, and somewhat fluttered. "Confound her impudence," said he. But there was no help for it; he grinned and bore it, as he had the blisters, and boluses, &c., rolled the clothes round his shoulders, and off to the sleep of the just again. Not so the passionate hypocrite, who, maddened by a paroxysm of jealousy, had taken this cowardly advantage of a prisoner. She had sucked fresh poison from those honest lips, and filled her veins with molten fire. She tossed and turned the livelong night in a high fever of passion, nor were the cold chills wanting of shame and fear at what she had done.

In the morning, Alfred remembered this substantial vision, and determined to find out which of those two it was. "I shall know by her looks," said he; "she won't be able to meet my eye." Well, the first he saw was Mrs. Archbold. She met his eye full with a mild and pensive dignity. "Come, it is not you," thought Alfred. Presently he fell in with Hannah. She wore a serene, infantine face, the picture of unobtrusive modesty. Alfred was dumbfoundered. "It's not this one, either," said he. "But, then, it must. Confound her impudence for looking so modest." However, he did not speak to her; he was looking out for a face that interested him far more: the weather-beaten countenance of Giles Brown. He saw him once or twice, but could not get him alone till the afternoon. He invited him into his room: and when he got him there,

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lost no time. "Just look me in the face, Brown," said he quietly. Brown looked him in the face.

"Now, sir, am I mad or sane?"

Brown turned his head away. Alfred laughed. "No, no, none of your tricks, old fellow: look me in the face while you answer."

The man coloured. "I can't look a gentleman like you in the face, and tell him he is mad."

"I should think not. Well, now; what shall I give you to help me escape?"

"Hush! don't mention that, sir; it's as much as my place is worth even to listen to you."

"Well! then I must give you as much as your place is worth. Please to calculate that, and name the figure."

"My place! I wouldn't lose it for a hundred pounds."

"Exactly. Then I'll give you a hundred guineas."

"And how am I to get my money, sir?"

"The first time you are out, come to Albion Villa, in Barkington, and I'll have it all ready for you."

"And suppose you were to say, 'No: you didn't ought ever to have been confined?'"

"I must trouble you to look in my face again, Mr. Brown. Now, do you see treason, bad faith, avarice, ingratitude, rascality in it?"

"Not a grain of 'em," said Brown, with an accent of conviction. "Well, now, I'll tell you the truth; I can read a gent by this time: and I'm no more

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afeard for the money than if I had it in my hand. But ye see my stomach won't let me do it."

This was a sad disappointment: so sudden, too. "Your stomach?" said he, ruefully. "What do you mean?"

"Ay, my stomach. Wouldn't *your* stomach rise against serving a man that had done you the worst turn one man can do another—been and robbed you of your sweetheart."

Alfred stared with amazement.

Brown continued, and now with some emotion: "Hannah Blake and I were very good friends till you came, and I was thinking of asking her to name the day; but now she won't look at me. 'Don't come teasing me,' says she, 'I am meat for your master.' It's you that have turned the girl's head, sir."

"Bother the women!" said Alfred cordially. "Oh, what plagues they are! And how unjust *you* are, to spite me for the fault of another. Can I help the fools from spooning upon me?" He reflected a moment, then burst out: "Brown, you are a duffer, a regular duffer. What, don't you see your game is to get me out of the place? If you do, in forty-eight hours I shall be married to my Julia, and that dumpling-faced girl will be cured. But if you keep me here, by Gee, sir, I'll make hot love to your Hannah, boiling hot, hotter than ever was—out of the isles of Greece. Oh! do help me out, and I'll give you the hundred pounds, and I'll give Hannah

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another hundred pounds, on condition she marries you; and, if she won't marry you, she shan't have a farthing, only a good hiding."

Brown was overpowered by his maniac's logic. "You have a head," said he; "there's my hand; I'll go in, if I die for it."

They now put their heads together over the means. Brown's plan was to wait, and wait, for an opportunity. Alfred's was to make one this very night.

"But how can I?" said Brown. "I shan't have the key of your room. I am not on watch in your part to-night."

"Borrow Hannah's."

"Hannah's? She has got no key of the male patients' rooms."

"Oh yes she has; of mine, at all events."

"What makes you think that, sir?" said Brown suspiciously.

Alfred didn't know what to say: he could not tell him why he felt sure she had a key.

"Just go quietly and ask her for it," said he: "don't tell her I sent you, now."

Brown obeyed, and returned in half an hour with the key of the vacant bedroom, where the hobbles and chains were hidden on the arrival of the justices.

"She tells me this is the only key she has of any room in this corridor. But dear heart," said Brown, "how quicksighted the women are. She said, say

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she, 'If it is to bring sorrowful true lovers together again, Giles, or the like of that, I'll try and get the key you want off Mrs. Archbold's bunch, though I get the sack for it,' says she. 'I know she leaves them in the parlour at night,' says Hannah. She is a trump, you must allow."

Alfred coloured up. He suspected he had been unjust.

"She is a good, kind, 'single-hearted 'girl," said he; "and neither of you shall find me ungrateful."

It was evident by the alacrity Brown now showed, that he had got his orders from Hannah.

It was agreed that Alfred should lie down at night in his clothes, ready to seize the right moment; that Hannah should get the key, and watch the coast clear, and let him out into the corridor; and Brown get him down by a back stairs, and out on the lawn. There he would find a ladder close by the wall, and his own arms and legs must do the rest.

And now Alfred was a changed creature: his eye sparkled; he walked on air, and already sniffed the air of liberty.

After tea Brown brought in some newspapers, and made Alfred a signal, previously agreed on, that the ladder was under the east wall. He went to bed early, put on his tweed shooting-jacket and trousers, and lay listening to the clock with beating heart.

At first feet passed to and fro from time to time. These became less frequent as the night wore on.

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Presently a light foot passed, stopped at the door, and made a sharp scratch on it with some metal instrument.

It was the key. The time was not ripe to use it, but good Hannah had taken this way to let him know she had got it.

This little scratch outside his door, oh it made his heart leap and thrill. One great difficulty was overcome. He waited, and waited, but with glowing, hopeful heart; and at last a foot came swiftly, the key turned, and Hannah opened the door. She had a bull's-eye lantern.

"Take your shoes in your hand," she whispered, "and follow me."

He followed her. She led him in and out, to the door of the public room belonging to the second class patients. Then she drew her whistle, and breathed very softly. Brown answered as softly from the other end. He was waiting at the opposite door.

"All right," said she; "the dangerous part is over." She put a key into the door, and said very softly, "Good-bye."

"God bless you, Hannah." said Alfred, with deep emotion. "God in heaven bless you for this."

"He will, he does," said the single-hearted girl, and put her other hand to her breast with a great gulp. She opened the door slowly. "Good-bye, dear. I shall never see you again."

And so these two parted; for Hannah could not

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bear the sight of Giles at that moment. He was welcome to Alfred though, most welcome, and conducted him by devious ways to the kitchen, lantern in hand.

He opened the kitchen door softly, and saw two burly strangers seated at a table, eating with all their souls, and Mrs. Archbold standing before the fire, but looking towards him: for she had heard his footsteps ever so far off.

The men looked up, and saw Alfred. They rose to their feet, and said, "This will be the gentleman, madam?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Archbold.

"Your servant, sir," said the men very civilly. "If you are ready, we are."

CHAPTER XX.

COULD any one have known what was passing in different places, he would have counted Alfred's deliverance a certainty; for Sampson's placard was on Barkington walls, and inside the asylum Alfred was softening hearts and buying consciences, as related; so, in fact, he had two strings to his bow.

But mark how strangely things turn; these two strings got entangled, and spoilt all. His father, alarmed by the placard, called at the pawnbroker's shop, and told him he must move Alfred directly

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to a London asylum. Baker raised objections; Mr. Hardie crushed them with his purse, i.e. with his son's and victim's sweetheart's father's money: so then, as Baker after all could not resist the project, but only postpone it for a day or two, he preferred to take a handsome present, and co-operate; he even connived at Mr. Hardie's signing the requisite name to the new order. This the giddy world calls forgery; but, in these calm retreats, far from the public's inquisitive eye, it goes for nothing. Why, Mrs. Archbold had signed Baker's name and Dr. Bailey's more than a hundred several times to orders, statements, and certificates; depriving Englishmen of their liberty and their property with a gesture of her taper fingers; and venting the conventional terms, "Aberration," "Exaltation," "Depression," "Debility," "Paralysis," "Excitable," "Abnormal," as boldly and blindly as any male starling in the flock.

On the very night then of Alfred's projected escape, two keepers came down from Dr. Wycherley's asylum to Silverton station: Baker met them, and drove them to Silverton House in his dog-cart. They were to take Alfred up by the night train; and, when he came into the kitchen with Brown, they suspected nothing, nor did Baker or Cooper, who presently emerged from the back kitchen. Brown saw, and recovered his wits partially. "Shall I go for his portmanteau, sir?" stammered he, making a shrewd and fortunate guess at what was

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up. Baker assented; and soon after went out to get the horse harnessed: on this Mrs. Archbold, pale, sorrowful, and silent hitherto, beckoned Alfred into the back kitchen, and there gave him his watch and his loose money. "I took care of them for you," said she; "for the like have often been stolen in this place. Put the money in your shoes; it may be useful to you."

He thanked her somewhat sullenly; for his disappointment was so deep and bitter that small kindnesses almost irritated him.

She sighed. "It is cruel to be angry with *me*," she said: "I am not the cause of this; it is a heavier blow to me than to you. Sooner or later you will be free—and then you will not waste a thought on me, I fear—but I must remain in this odious prison without your eyes and your smile to lighten me, yet unable to forget you. Oh, Alfred, for mercy's sake whisper me one kind word at parting; give me one kind look to remember and dote upon."

She put out both hands as eloquently as she spoke, and overpowered his prudence so far that he took her offered hands—they were as cold now as they were burning hot the last time—and pressed them, and said, "I shall be grateful to you while I live."

The passionate woman snatched her hands away. "Gratitude is too cold for me," she cried; "I scorn even yours. Love me, or hate me."

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He made no reply. And so they parted.

"Will you pledge your honour to make no attempt at escape on the road?" asked the pawnbroker, on his return.

"I'll see you d—d first," replied the prisoner.

On this he was handcuffed, and helped into the dog-cart.

They went up to town by the midnight train; but, to Alfred's astonishment and delight, did not take a carriage to themselves.

However, station after station was passed, and nobody came into their carriage. At last they stopped at a larger station, and a good many people were on the platform: Alfred took this opportunity and appealed in gentle but moving terms to the first good and intelligent face he saw. "Sir," said he, "I implore your assistance."

The gentleman turned courteously to him. The keepers, to Alfred's surprise, did not interrupt.

"I am the victim of a conspiracy, sir; they pretend I am mad: and are taking me by force to a madhouse, a living tomb."

"You certainly don't appear to be mad," said the gentleman.

The head keeper instantly showed him the order and a copy of the certificates.

"Don't look at *them*, sir," cried Alfred; "they are signed by men who were bribed to sign them. For pity's sake, sir, judge for yourself. Test my memory, my judgment, by any question you please. Use

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your own good sense; don't let those venal rogues judge for you."

The gentleman turned cold directly.

"I could not take on me to interfere," said he. The unsworn affidavits had overpowered his senses. He retired with a frigid inclination. Alfred wrung his handcuffed hands, and the connecting chain rattled.

The men never complained: his conduct was natural; and they knew their strength. At the next station he tested a snob's humanity instead of a gentleman's. He had heard they were more tender hearted. The answer was a broad grin: repeated at intervals.

Being called mad was pretty much the same thing as being mad to a mind of this class: and Alfred had admitted he was called mad.

At the next station he implored a silvery haired old gentleman. Old age, he had heard, has known griefs, and learned pity.

The keeper showed the certificates.

"Ah!" said Senex; "poor young man. Now don't agitate yourself. It is all for your good. Pray go quietly. Very painful, very painful." And he hobbled away as fast as he could. It is by shirking the painful some live to be silvery old.

Next he tried a policeman. Bobby listened to him erect as a dart.

The certificates were shown him.

He eyed them and said sharply, "All right."

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Nor could Alfred's entreaties and appeals to common sense attract a word or even a look from him. Alfred cried "Help! murder! If you are Englishmen, if you are Christians, help me."

This soon drew a crowd round him, listening to his fiery tale of wrong, and crying "Shame, shame! Let him go." The keepers touched their heads, winked, and got out and showed the certificates; the crowd melted away like wax before those two suns of evidence (unsworn). The train moved on.

It was appalling. How could he ever get free? Between his mind and that of his fellows there lay a spiritual barrier more impassable than the walls of fortified cities.

Yet, at the very next station, with characteristic tenacity of purpose, he tried again; for he saw a woman standing near, a buxom country woman of forty. Then he remembered that the Naked Eye was not yet an extinct institution among her sex. He told her his tale, and implored her to use her own eyes. She seemed struck, and did eye him far more closely than the men had; and told the keepers they ought to be ashamed of themselves; he was no madman, for she had seen madmen." They showed her the certificates.

"Oh, I am no scholar!" said she contemptuously; "ye can't write my two eyes out of my head."

The keeper whipped off Alfred's cap and showed his shaven crown.

"La! so he is," said she, lowering her tone;

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"dear heart, what a pity! And such a pretty young gentleman." And after that all he could say only drew the dew of patient pity to her eyes.

The train went on, and left her standing there, a statue of negative clemency. Alfred lost heart. He felt how impotent he was. "I shall die in a madhouse," he said. He shivered in a corner, hating man, and doubting God.

They reached Dr. Wycherley's early in the morning. Alfred was shown into a nice clean bedroom, and asked whether he would like to bathe or sleep. "Oh, a bath," he said; and was allowed to bathe himself. He had not been long in the water when Dr. Wycherley's medical assistant tapped at the door, and then entered without further ceremony; a young gentleman with a longish down on his chin, which, initiated early in the secrets of physiology, he was too knowing to shave off and so go to meet his trouble. He came in looking like a machine, with a note-book in his hand, and stood by the bath side dictating notes to himself and jotting them down.

"Six contusions: two on the thorax, one on the abdomen, two on the thighs, one near the patella; turn, please." Alfred turned in the water. "A slight dorsal abrasion; also of the wrists; a severe excoriation of the ankle. Leg-lock, eh?"

"Yes."

"Iron leg-lock. Head shaved. Large blister. Good! Any other injuries external or internal under old system?"

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"Yes, sir, confined as a madman though sane, as *you*, I am sure, have the sense to see."

"Oh, never mind that; we are all sane here—except the governor and I."

He whipped out, and entered the condition of the new patient's body with jealous minuteness in the case-book. As for his mind, he made no inquiry into that; indeed he was little qualified for researches of the kind.

At breakfast Alfred sat with a number of mad ladies and gentlemen, who by firmness, kindness, and routine, had been led into excellent habits: the linen was clean and the food good. He made an excellent meal, and set about escaping; with this view he explored the place. Nobody interfered with him; but plenty of eyes watched him. The house was on the non-restraint system. He soon found that this system was as bad for him as it was good for the insane. Non-restraint implied a great many attendants, and constant vigilance. Moreover, the doors were strong, the windows opened only eight inches, and that from the top; their framework was iron, painted like wood, &c. It was next to impossible to get into the yard at night; and then it looked quite impossible to get any further, for the house was encompassed by high walls.

He resigned all hope of escape without connivance. He sounded a keeper; the man fired at the first word. "Come, none of that, sir; you should know better than tempt a poor man."

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Alfred coloured to the eyes; and sighed deeply. To have honour thrown in his face, and made the reason for not aiding him to baffle a dishonourable conspiracy! But he took the reproof so sweetly, the man was touched, and by-and-by, seeing him deeply dejected, said good naturedly, "Don't be down on your luck, sir. If you are really better, which you don't look to have much the matter now, why not write to the Commissioners and ask to be let out?"

"Because my letters will be intercepted."

"Ay, to your friends; but not to the Commissioners of Lunacy. Not in this house, any way."

"God bless you!" cried Alfred impetuously. 'You are my benefactor; you are an honest fellow; give me your hand."

"Well, why not? Only you mustn't excite yourself. Take it easy." (Formula.)

"Oh, no cant among friends!" said Alfred: "wouldn't you be excited at the hope of getting out of prison?"

"Well, I don't know but I might. Bound I am as sick of it as you are."

Alfred got paper and sketched the letter on which so much depended. It took him six hours. He tore up two; he cooled down the third, and condensed it severely: by this means, after much thought, he produced a close and telling composition: he also weeded it of every trait and every term he had observed in mad people's talk, or the letters they had shown him. So there was no inco-

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herency, no heat, no prolixity, no "spies," no "conspiracy," no italics. A simple, honest, earnest story, with bitter truth stamped on every line; a sober, strong appeal from a sore heart but hard head to the arbiters of his fate.

To the best of my belief no madman, however slightly touched, or however cunning, ever wrote a letter so gentle yet strong, so earnest yet calm, so short yet full, and withal so lucid and cleanly jointed as this was: and I am no contemptible judge; for I have accumulated during the last few years a large collection of letters from persons deranged in various degrees, and studied them minutely, more minutely than most Psychologicals study anything but Pounds, Shillings, and Verbiage.

The letter went, and he hoped but scarcely expected an answer by return of post. It did not come. He said to his heart, "Be still;" and waited. Another day went by; and another: he gnawed his heart, and waited: he pined, and waited on. The Secret Tribunal, which was all a shallow legislature had left him, "took it easy." Secret Tribunals always do.

But, while the victim-suitor longed and pined and languished for one sound from the voice of Justice and Humanity, and while the Secret Tribunal, not being in prison itself all this time, "took it easy," events occurred at Barkington that bade fair to throw open the prison doors, and bring father and son, bride and bridegroom, together again under one roof.

But at what a price!

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CHAPTER XXI.

MR. HARDIE found his daughter lying ashy pale on a little bed in the drawing-room of Albion Villa. She was now scarce conscious. The old doctor sat at her head looking very grave; and Julia kneeled over her beloved friend, pale as herself, with hands clasped convulsively, and great eyes of terror and grief.

That vivid young face, full of foreboding and woe, struck Mr. Hardie the moment he entered, and froze his very heart: the strong man quivered and sank slowly like a felled tree by the bedside; and his face and the poor girl's, whose earthly happiness he had coldly destroyed, nearly met over his crushed daughter.

"Jane, my child," he gasped; "my poor little Jane!"

"Oh let me sleep," she moaned feebly.

"Darling, it's your own papa," said Julia softly.

"Poor papa!" said she, turning rather to Julia than to him. "Let me sleep."

She was in a half lethargic state.

Mr. Hardie asked the doctor in an agitated

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whisper if he might move her home. The doctor shook his head: "Not by my advice; her pulse is scarce perceptible. We must not move her, nor excite her, nor yet let her sink into lethargy. She is in great danger; very great."

At these terrible words Mr. Hardie groaned: and they all began to speak below the breath.

"Edward," murmured Mrs. Dodd hurriedly, "run and put off the auction: put it off altogether: then go to the railway; nothing must come here to make a noise: and get straw put down directly. Do that first, dear."

"You are kinder to me than I deserve," muttered Mr. Hardie humbly, quite cowed by the blow that had fallen on him.

The words agitated Mrs. Dodd with many thoughts: but she whispered as calmly as she could, "Let us think of nothing now but this precious life."

Mr. Hardie begged to see the extent of the injury. Mrs. Dodd dissuaded him; but he persisted. Then the doctor showed her poor head.

At that the father uttered a scream and sat quivering. Julia buried her face in the bed-clothes directly, and sobbed vehemently. It passed faintly across the benumbed and shuddering father, "How she loves my child; they all love her:"- but the thought made little impression at the time; the mind was too full of terror and woe. The doctor now asked for brandy, in a whisper. Mrs. Dodd left the room with stealthy foot, and brought it. He

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asked for a quill. Julia went with swift, stealthy foot, and brought it. With adroit and tender hands they aided the doctor, and trickled stimulants down her throat. Then sat like statues of grief about the bed; only every now and then eye sought eye, and endeavoured to read what the other thought. Was there hope? Was there none? And by-and-by, so roving is the mind, especially when the body is still, these statues began to thrill with thoughts of the past as well as the absorbing present.

Ay, here were met a strange party; a stranger, for its size, methinks never yet met on earth, to mingle their hearts together in one grief.

Just think! Of him who sat there with his face hidden in his hands, and his frame shuddering, all the others were the victims.

Yet the lady, whose husband he had robbed and driven mad, pitied and sympathised with him, and he saw it; the lady, whom he had insulted at the altar and blighted her young heart and life, pitied and sympathised with him; the poor old doctor pitied and sympathised, and was more like an anxious father than a physician.

Even Jane was one of his victims; for she fell by the hand of a man he had dishonestly ruined and driven out of his senses.

Thinking of all he had done, and this the end of it, he was at once crushed and melted.

He saw with awe that a mightier hand than man's as upon him; it had tossed him and his daughter

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into the house and the arms of the injured Dodds, in defiance of all human calculation; and he felt himself a straw in that hand: so he was, and the great globe itself. Oh if Jane should die! the one creature he loved, the one creature, bereaved of whom he could get no joy even from riches.

What would he not give to recal the past, since all his schemes had but ended in this. Thus stricken by terror of the divine wrath, and touched by the goodness and kindness of those he had cruelly wronged, all the man was broken with remorse. Then he vowed to undo his own work as far as possible: he would do anything, everything, if Heaven would spare him his child.

Now it did so happen that these resolves, earnest and sincere but somewhat vague, were soon put to the test; and, as often occurs, what he was called on to do first, was that which he would rather have done last. Thus it was: about five o'clock in the afternoon Jane Hardie opened her eyes and looked about her.

It was a moment of intense anxiety. They all made signals, but held their breath. She smiled at sight of Mr. Hardie, and said, "Papa! dear papa!"

There was great joy: silent on the part of Mrs. Dodd and Julia; but Mr. Hardie, who saw in this a good omen, Heaven recognising his penitence, burst out: "She knows me; she speaks; she will live. How good God is! Yes, my darling child, it is your own father. You will be brave and get well for my sake."

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Jane did not seem to pay much heed to these words; she looked straight before her like one occupied with her own thought, and said distinctly and solemnly, "Papa—send for Alfred."

It fell on all three like a clap of thunder, those gentle but decided tones, those simple natural words.

Julia's eyes flashed into her mother's, and then sought the ground directly.

There was a dead silence.

Mr. Hardie was the one to speak. "Why for him, dear? Those who love you best are all here."

"For Heaven's sake don't thwart her, sir," said the doctor, in alarm. "This is no time to refuse her anything in your power. Sometimes the very expectation of a beloved person coming keeps them alive; stimulates the powers."

Mr. Hardie was sore perplexed. He recoiled from the sudden exposure that might take place, if Alfred without any preparation or previous conciliatory measures were allowed to burst in upon them. And while his mind was whirling within him in doubt and perplexity, Jane spoke again; but no longer calmly and connectedly: she was beginning to wander. Presently in her wandering she spoke of Edward; called him dear Edward. Mrs. Dodd rose hastily, and her first impulse was to ask both gentlemen to retire; so instinctively does a good woman protect

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her own sex against the other. But, reflecting that this was the father, she made an excuse and retired herself instead, followed by Julia. The doctor divined, and went to the window. The father sat by the bed, and soon gathered his daughter loved Edward Dodd.

The time was gone by when this would have greatly pained him.

He sighed like one overmatched by fate; but said, "You shall have him, my darling; he is a good young man, he shall be your husband; you shall be happy. Only live for my sake, for all our sakes." She paid no attention and wandered on a little; but her mind gradually cleared, and by-and-by she asked quietly for a glass of water. Mr. Hardie gave it her. She sipped, and he took it from her. She looked at him close, and said distinctly, "Have you sent for Alfred?"

"No, love, not yet."

"Not yet?! There is no time to lose," she said gravely.

Mr. Hardie trembled. Then, being alone with her, the miserable man unable to say no, unwilling to say yes, tried to persuade her not to ask for Alfred. "My dear," he whispered, "I will not refuse you: but I have a secret to confide to you. Will you keep it?"

"Yes, papa, faithfully."

"Poor Alfred is not himself. He has delusions; he is partly insane. My brother Thomas has thought it best for us all to put him under gentle

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restraint for a time. It would retard his cure to have him down here and subject him to excitement."

"Papa," said Jane, "are you deceiving me, or are you imposed upon? Alfred insane! It is a falsehood. He came to me the night before the wedding that was to be. O my brother, my darling brother, how dare they say you are insane! That letter you showed me then was a falsehood? O papa!"

"I feared to frighten you," said Mr. Hardie, and hung his head.

"I see it all," she cried; "those wicked men with their dark words have imposed on you. Bring him to me that I may reconcile you all, and end all this misery ere I go hence and be no more seen."

"Oh, my child, don't talk so," cried Mr. Hardie, trembling. "Think of your poor father."

"I do," she cried, "I do. Oh, papa, I lie here between two worlds, and see them both so clear. Trust to me: and, if you love me——"

"If I love you, Jane? better than all the world twice told."

"Then don't refuse me this one favour: the last, perhaps, I shall ever ask you. I want my brother here before it is too late. Tell him he must come to his little sister, who loves him dearly, and—is dying."

"Oh no! no! no!" cried the agonised father, casting everything to the winds. "I will. He shall be here in twelve hours. Only promise me to bear up. Have a strong will; have courage. You

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shall have Alfred, you shall have anything you like on earth, anything that money can get you. What am I saying? I have no money; it is all gone. But I have a father's heart. Madam, Mrs. Dodd!" She came directly.

"Can you give me paper? No, I won't trust to a letter. I'll send off a special messenger this moment. It is for my son, madam. He will be here to-morrow morning. God knows how it will all end. But how can I refuse my dying child? Oh, madam, you are good, kind, forgiving; keep my poor girl alive for me: keep telling her Alfred is coming; she cares more for him than for her poor heartbroken father."

And the miserable man rushed out, leaving Mrs. Dodd in tears for him.

He was no sooner gone than Julia came in; and clasped her mother, and trembled on her bosom. Then Mrs. Dodd knew she had overheard Mr. Hardie's last words.

Jane Hardie, too, though much exhausted by the scene with her father, put out her hand to Julia, and took hers, and said feebly, but with a sweet smile, "He is coming, love; all shall be well." Then to herself as it were, and looking up with a gentle rapture in her pale face:

"Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God."

On this thought she seemed to feed with innocent joy; but for a long time was too weak to speak again.

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Mr. Hardie, rushing from the house, found Edward at work outside; he was crying undisguisedly, and with his coat off working harder at spreading the straw than both the two men together he had got to help him. Mr. Hardie took his hand and wrung it, but could not speak.

In half an hour a trusty agent he had often employed was at the station waiting for the up-train, nearly due.

He came back to Albion Villa. Julia met him on the stairs with her finger to her lips. "She is sleeping; the doctor has hopes. Oh, sir, let us all pray for her day and night."

Mr. Hardie blessed her; it seemed the face of an angel, so earnest, so lovely, so pious. He went home: and at the door of his own house Peggy met him with anxious looks. He told her what he had done.

"Good Heavens!" said she: "have you forgotten? He says he will kill you the first day he gets out. You told me so yourself."

"Yes, Baker said so. I can't help it. I don't care what becomes of me; I care only for my child. Leave me, Peggy; there, go; go."

He was no sooner alone than he fell upon his knees, and offered the Great Author of life and death —a bargain. "Oh God," he cried, "I own my sins, and I repent them. Spare but my child, who never sinned against Thee, and I will undo all I have done amiss in Thy sight. I will refund that money on

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which Thy curse lies. I will throw myself on their mercy. I will set my son free. I will live on a pittance. I will part with Peggy. I will serve Mammon no more. I will attend Thine ordinances. I will live soberly, honestly, and godly all the remainder of my days; only do Thou spare my child. She is Thy servant, and does Thy work on earth, and there is nothing on earth I love but her."

And now the whistle sounded, the train moved, and his messenger was flying fast to London, with a note to Dr. Wycherley:

"Dear Sir,—My poor daughter lies dangerously wounded, and perhaps at the point of death. She cries for her brother. He must come down to us instantly, with the bearer of this. Send one of your people with him if you like. But it is not necessary. I enclose a blank cheque, signed, which please fill at your discretion.

"I am, with thanks,

"Yours in deep distress,

"RICHARD HARDIE."

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